

**IMPACT OF U.S.E PROGRAM ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. A CASE STUDY OF
NEBBI MUNICIPALITY**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined “the impact of Universal Secondary Education program on community development, with Nebbi Municipality as the case study”. The study was guided by the following objectives: To examine the contribution of USE on students’ academic performance, to establish the role of USE in promoting Girl Child education and to find out the challenges facing the implementation of USE program in Nebbi Municipality. Qualitative and Quantitative research designs were used. A Sample of 38 respondents was selected and participated in the study. The data was collected using questionnaires. Purposive sampling was used in conjunction with simple random sample to enable the investigator to choose responders from a variety of categories. According to the survey, learning achievement at USE schools is still subpar and has a poor completion rate. Adolescents who struggle to graduate fare significantly worse on national examinations than their peers from non-USE institutions. Even though the program struggles with poor retention rates, the survey found that it has had a significant positive impact on USE school registrations. The results in the table show that the USE program has made it more challenging to maintain children's interest because of crowded classrooms, which has a negative impact on productivity. 66 percent and 13 percent of participants, who were in agreement and disagreement with the statement, respectively, supported this opinion. Only 21% of people disapproved with the assertion, on the other hand. The study identified a number of issues that hindered the execution of the USE program, including: insufficient and slow government funding distribution to schools, parental carelessness, overflowing classrooms, and extreme partisanship.

To optimize the benefits of the program, it was advised that the USE program be completely revamped.

Key words: girl child education, U.S.E and community development

Background of the study

By 2030, all girls and boys will have completed free, equitable, and high-quality primary and secondary education, and all students will have acquired the expertise and abilities necessary to support sustainable growth, according to the UN Agenda for SDG 4 (UN, 2015). According to Lawson (2019), basic education is one of the most crucial ways that the poor may combat and address the developing disparities and provide their fellow citizens with dignified lifestyles. This is only achievable if education is egalitarian, free, and appropriately funded. Consequently, any approach to growth focused on improving the lives of people should include educational opportunities as a crucial component. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda is one of the nation's working to promote secondary as well as basic school education. In 1997, Uganda implemented a free, universal primary education (UPE) policy (Pauline, 2023). Since that time, public schools have offered free primary education. The free universal secondary schooling (USE) program was implemented by the government of Uganda in 2007, making it unique among Sub-Saharan countries. The goal of Uganda's Universal Secondary Education policy is to provide underprivileged students with a chance to receive secondary schooling and the opportunity to do so (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Government of Uganda launched its Universal Secondary Education (USE) strategy in 2007 as a follow-up to Universal Primary Education (UPE) in order to increase the availability of outstanding secondary schooling for economically weak households. While the effects of UPE have been extensive analysis, USE has not. The first school in Nebbi Municipal Council (MNC), formerly known as Nebbi Town Council, to put into USE inside the town council was Nebbi Town S.S. However, residents of Nebbi municipality and other national stakeholders still have a poor understanding of how the USE program has the potential to improve neighborhoods. Even though the USE program is one of the treatments helping children from low-income household's

access school in places like Nebbi, there is currently insufficient knowledge about how the USE program and changing communities in Nebbi Municipality are related (Oromo et al., 2023). As a result, the study uses Nebbi Town S.S. as a case study to determine the effects of USE on populations.

Objectives of the study

- 1. To examine the contribution of USE on students' academic performance in Nebbi Municipality*
- 2. To establish the role of USE in promoting Girl Child education in Nebbi Municipality*
- 3. To find out the challenges facing the implementation of USE program in Nebbi Municipality*

Research questions

- 1. What are the contributions of USE program on academic performance in Nebbi Municipality?*
- 2. What are the roles played by USE in promoting Girl Child education in Nebbi Municipality?*
- 3. What are the challenges facing the implementation of USE program in Nebbi Municipality?*

Methodology

Research Design

According to Wadsworth (2007), a study design is a general strategy for how you want to approach obtaining answers to your inquiries, followed by developing your inquiries and aims.

A comprehensive and cross-sectional study design will be employed to gather as much data as possible. The properties of the variables were determined and described with the aid of descriptive design. A sample was collected as it is at the moment of the study, and a cross-sectional methodology made it possible to collect data only once, possibly over a period of days or weeks. The analysis of data was done using an analytical methodology.

Study Population

The study population is the total number of people in the study region, whereas the sample population is made up of the representations of that section who share the same geographical distribution features as the overall population from which they were selected in order to represent comparable features in the population (Earl R, 2010).

50 people are targeted by the study, including educators, parents, pupils, opinion leaders, and school officials. The Krejcie and Morgan table (1970) provided the data for this. These individuals were chosen because it was believed that they knew more about the subject matter of the study.

Sample Size

The sample size of a study is simply the number of participants in a study (Hartl, 2007). The sample size constituted 50 respondents, among the 50, 6 were administrators, 12 teachers, 10 parents, 6 opinion leaders and 20 students. This is presented in the table below,

Table 1: The category of respondents, population size, Sample Size and sampling technique.

<i>Category of respondents</i>	<i>Population size</i>	<i>Sample size</i>	<i>Sampling technique</i>
<i>School Administrators</i>	9	5	<i>Purposive sampling</i>
<i>Teachers</i>	18	10	<i>Simple random sampling</i>
<i>Opinion leaders</i>	8	6	<i>Purposive sampling</i>
<i>Parents</i>	14	10	<i>Purposive sampling</i>
<i>MEO</i>	1	1	<i>Purposive sampling</i>
<i>CDO</i>	1	1	<i>Purposive sampling</i>
<i>Town Agents</i>	12	5	<i>Simple random sampling</i>
<i>Total</i>	63	38	

Sampling strategies

Sampling strategy refers to the method that is used by a researcher to select the respondents of the study (Hartl, 2007).

The instructors and pupils that were chosen using a basic random sampling approach employed simple random sampling. According to Dickens (2007), it describes a subset of a statistical population where every individual has an equal chance of being chosen. Simple random sampling, according to Sekaran (2003), has the smallest amount of bias and allows for the largest abstraction, which informs the justifications for its usage in this study.

The investigator chose parents, community opinion leaders, and school officials using a purposive sample technique. Using this sample technique, instances that are particularly instructive were chosen (Mugenda and Mugenda 2003).

Data Analysis

To enable the investigator to draw logical and precise decisions, statistical techniques were utilized to analyze data by computing, tabulating, and presenting data in proportions, as well as to explain, make comparisons, and produce a visual representation of the findings. SPSS was used to assemble all the results for simple comprehension and comprehensiveness using qualitative methodologies (Nelson et al., 2022). In terms of correctness, the investigator made sure that the answers provided had an acceptable degree of uniformity, and in cases when the reasoning and consistency are contradictory, the investigator had to examine the answers provided more closely. Quantitative and qualitative data had been analyzed and processed in a different way using SPSS and E-views (Nelson et al., 2023)

RESULTS

Contribution of USE program on students' academic performance

Table 2: USE program students' performance

Statement 1: The USE program has led to improvement in quality of students' performance in both class and national examinations		
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Agree</i>	19	50
<i>Disagree</i>	2	5
<i>Strongly agree</i>	16	42

<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	3
Grand Total	38	100

Source: Primary data, 2021

The study's conclusions are presented in Table 2, which reveals that 50% of the participants agreed with the statement that the USE program had improved the caliber of pupils who performed well on national exams, 5% disagreed, and 42% strongly agreed. Only 3% of the participants completely agreed with the statement that the USE program had improved the caliber of pupils who scored well on national exams. This discovery raises issues According to research done in Kenya by Awino (2013), the standard of education was below average as seen by pupil achievement on national exams. With a few exceptions, Kenya, one of the nations that provide free secondary education, had dismal testing outcomes for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education.

Table 3: USE program and students' enrollment

Statement 2: The USE program has led to increase in enrolment in partner secondary schools as a result of fees reduction.		
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Agree</i>	16	42
<i>Disagree</i>	1	3
<i>Strongly agree</i>	19	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2	5
Grand Total	38	100

Source: Primary data, 2021

The majority of participants, with over 42% agreeing and 50% completely concurring, agreed, in accordance with the results in the table above, that the USE program had increased the enrollment rate among pupils in partner schools. Only 3% of respondents disapproved, and 5% were very much in agreement. This result suggests that the USE program significantly increased the number of students enrolled in secondary schools in Nebbi Municipality. According to Kristof (2015),

total secondary school enrollment in Uganda expanded significantly in the years after the USE program was put into place. Ndambuki (2016), who concluded that free of tuition secondary education in Kenya had resulted in high numbers of students registering into secondary schools as a result of a decrease in dropouts, verified the dramatic increase in enrollment.

Table 4: USE and class attendance

<i>Statement 3: Relieving parents from responsibility of paying high school fees has improved on class attendance with limited absenteeism of students in schools</i>		
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	21	55
Disagree	10	26
Strongly Agree	4	11
Strongly Disagree	3	8
Grand Total	38	100.00

Source: Primary data, 2021

According to research results shown in the table above, 11% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, and 55% of participants agreed that fees were reduced as a result of the launch of the USE program. In the additional eight per cent who were highly dissatisfied with the perspective, 26% of the participants disapproved. According to the data, even while the majority of the participants agree that releasing families from the obligation of paying school fees has boosted enrollment in classes, a sizable portion of participants disagree.

Table 5: USE program and dropout rates

<i>Statement 4: USE schools have low drop out of students leading to high completion rates.</i>		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	18	53
Disagree	8	26
Not sure	3	7

Strongly Agree	6	14
Grand Total	38	100.00

Source: Primary Data, 2021

According to the study's conclusions, which are shown in the table above, fourteen per cent of the participants completely concurred with the assertion, and 53 percent of participants agreed that the USE program has lowered rates of abandonment, which has resulted in high completion rates. In contrast, 26% of the participants disputed that the USE program had increased secondary school graduation rates in the Nebbi Municipality, while 7% of respondents were unsure. This result concurs with a MOES (2014) report that demonstrates an increase in graduation rates from 16 to 40 percent in 2013. According to the results, the USE program has increased the number of secondary school graduates in Nebbi Municipality.

Role played by USE in promoting Girl Child education in Nebbi Municipality

Table 6: USE program and fertility rates

<i>Statement 1: USE has enabled girl child to spend most of her time in school hence reducing early marriage, high fertility rates and annual rate of population growth</i>		
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	31	43.06
Disagree	28	38.89
Not sure	3	4.17
Strongly Disagree	9	12.50
Strongly Agree	1	1.39
Grand Total	72	100.00

Source: Primary Data, 2021

The study's findings show that 43% of the participants concurred with the assertion that the USE program allows girls in the Nebbi Municipality to dedicate the majority of their time in school, thereby lowering the rates of early marriage, fertility rates, and rapid expansion of the population, while 1% of participants

strongly concurred. However, just 39% of the participants concurred with the claim that the USE program had allowed girls to spend the majority of their time in school. Who strongly disapproved with that assertion served as additional evidence for this.

Table 7: USE program and women's health care knowledge

<i>Statement 2: USE has increased women's knowledge about HIV/AIDS and their ability to make decision about their own Health care</i>		
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	37	51.39
Disagree	21	29.17
Strongly Agree	9	12.50
Strongly Disagree	5	6.94
Grand Total	72	100.00

Source: Primary data, 2021

According to the results in the table, 51% of the participants agreed that the establishment of the USE program in Nebbi Municipality has enhanced women's understanding about HIV/AIDS. The 13% of the participants who were completely in agreement with the assertion provided additional backing to this opinion. Along with 7% of the participants who strongly disapproved, 29 percent of participants disapproved. The results show that a large proportion of the participants agree with the assertion that the USE program, as emphasized by (Psacharopoulos, 1994), contributed to women's understanding.

Table 8: USE and women's decision ability

<i>Statement 3: USE program has raised women's ability to make decisions in their households</i>		
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	37	52
Disagree	28	38
Strongly Agree	4	6

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	3	4
Grand Total	72	100.00%

Source: primary data, 2021

The findings in the above table demonstrate that the USE program has improved women's capacity to make judgments for their communities. 52 percent of the participants agreed with this opinion, and 6 percent strongly agreed, supporting it. However, of the people polled who disapproved with the assertion, 38% did so strongly; 4% disapproved even more. The International Partnership for Education (2018) findings that USE might enhance women's understanding of HIV/AIDS and their capacity to choose their own healthcare by one tenth internationally reinforced this point of view. Additionally, women's psychological health may advance and the likelihood of violence against intimate partners may decline. In many countries, a higher level of education for mother is associated with a reduction in the risk of stunting for their young children (Ngeno, 2015).

Table 9: USE program and earnings of women

Statement 4: Average earnings of girls have improved as a result of basic education attained through USE	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Agree</i>	31	43.
<i>Disagree</i>	39	54
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	1	2
<i>Strongly agree</i>	1	1
Grand Total	72	100.00

Source: Primary data, 2021

According to the results in the table above, 43% of the participants agreed that the USE program's deployment had increased the average salaries of women in the community. In addition to 2 percent of the participants who were strongly dissatisfied with the statement, 54% of participants disapproved with the viewpoint. The majority of the participants disagree with the assertion that the USE program has

not increased the earnings of women in the township, which is in line with the results of the research. This result calls into question the World Bank's (2018) estimate that women with primary education—whether partial or complete—earn 19 to 30% more than those with little schooling at all.

Challenges facing the implementation of USE program in Nebbi Municipality

Table 10: USE and classroom congestions

Statement 1: Class rooms are congested and as such it is difficult to keep attention of students hence undermining performance		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	66
Disagree	8	21
Strongly agree	5	13
Grand Total	38	100

Source: Primary data, 2021

The results in the table show that the USE program has made it more difficult to maintain children's attention because of crowded classrooms, which has a negative impact on productivity. 66 percent and 13 percent of participants, who were both in agreement and disagreement with the statement, respectively, supported this opinion. Only 21% of people disagreed with the assertion, on the other hand. This result suggests that crowded classrooms provide a significant obstacle to the development of the USE program in Nebbi Municipality. Research undertaken by Fast Track Initiative (FTI, 2015) provides additional support for this. For instance, the mean teacher-student ratio in 2010 was 1:66, making it difficult to maintain the children's focus and affecting their academic achievement.

Table 11: Effect of USE on staffing and infrastructures

Statement 2: The USE program is underfunded hence leading to gaps in both staffing and infrastructures		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	21	55

<i>Disagree</i>	1	3
<i>Not sure</i>	1	3
<i>Strongly agree</i>	15	39
Grand Total	38	100

Source: Primary data, 2021

According to the study's findings, which are shown in the table, there are staffing shortages and infrastructure gaps brought on by inadequate government financing. 39 percent of participants completely concurred with the statement in question, and 55 percent of participants who thought that the USE program is underpaid by the government endorsed this opinion. Only 3 percent of the participants expressed uncertainty, and 3 percent disapproved with the claim. The study by Kristof (2015) that shows that the USE program is understaffed and as a result causes gaps in both manpower and facilities further supports this conclusion.

Table 12: USE and teacher morale

Statement 3: USE program has led to high enrolment rates in schools; leading to increased work pressure on teachers and yet no salary top-ups hence lowering teachers' morale		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Agree</i>	17	45
<i>Disagree</i>	3	8
<i>Not sure</i>	2	5
<i>Strongly agree</i>	16	42
Grand Total	38	100

Source: Primary data, 2021

According to table 12, which summarizes respondents' responses, 45% of those polled believed that the USE program had put stress on the teaching staff due to rising enrollment numbers and low motivation among teachers, which had a negative impact on morale. While 5% of the participants were unsure, 42% of participants said they strongly agreed with the statement. Only 8% of those surveyed concurred with the assertion. This finding makes it quite evident that the high participation rates' impact on increasing strain on teachers has resulted in poorer teacher morale. This was further supported by a study done in 2013 by Verger, who found that certain overcrowded schools use a double shift framework, where pupils are taught in two shifts, during the early hours and the evening.

Conclusion

In relation to the findings in pervious chapters, the study concludes that USE program can greatly contribute to community development better than the current levels if the gaps identified are properly addressed. The study established that, limited budget is a factor affecting the program from achieving the intended objectives.

Recommendation

Parental engagement, on the other hand, is defined by the National Parent Teacher Association as the active participation of parents in every aspect of a child's education and growth from birth until maturity. Therefore, responsibilities include—but are not limited to—knowing what the kid in question has been learning in school, seeking at their transfer books, finding out what they talked about, getting advice and tips from instructors to help their children at home, and making general choices about young people's education, health, and happiness in order to have an impact on their lives.

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