

**DECENTRALIZATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF
PRIMARY EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY
A CASE OF MBARARA DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at assessing the challenges of primary education service delivery in relation to decentralization. Different objectives guided the study including assessing the level of effectiveness and challenges of the various stakeholders in primary education service delivery , assessing whether the level of collaboration amongst the various centers of power in the delivery of primary education services under the decentralization system poses a challenge and identifying other underlying issues that can pose a challenge in respect to governance and accountability in the education sector.

The area of the study was Mbarara district. Field data was collected from four randomly selected sub counties (Nyakayojo, Birere, Sanga and Bubaare). One division of Mbarara municipality was purposely selected. The focus of this study was at the sub county level where two randomly selected primary schools were visited and the total of 80 teachers, 20 head teachers 31 key informants and 20 pupils were approached. Key information interview were held with senior civil servants and political leaders at the district and sub county levels.

The interview guides were used to collect information from the key informants for the purpose of qualitative data while a questionnaire was designed for teachers to collect quantitative data. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The findings of the study established that the major challenges of the delivery of primary education services are teachers' related factors. The long distance travelled by teachers, and the uncoordinated frequent transfers pose a big challenge to their service delivery. It was also

established that pupils who study the whole day without a meal and the automatic promotion from one class to another were other challenges. The fact that most of the local council members lack adequate formal education was also observed. The study however established positive outcomes as a result of improved collaboration of stake holders and the intervention of central government. This was observed in monitoring the progress of universal primary Education service delivery.

The conclusions drawn from the findings were that there are gaps in the shared vision among the district centres of power and the various stake holders that play a key role in the education service delivery process. Service providers and the service receivers do not always view themselves as having complementary roles in primary education decentralization process. There is also lack of accountability of funds utilized by head teachers.

The study recommends that training of teachers and other stake holders of primary services should be given a priority in order to improve on capacity building. This will help members who directly implement UPE programmes to gain more knowledge and skills. The decentralization of authority and responsibility for UPE design should be marked with adequate and steady transfers of resources. Also, the central government should collaborate with local government in policy guideline formulation which will lead to better service delivery.