

**Challenges Facing Pupils Academic Performance in Religious Education in Lower Primary
Section in Kasaawo sub county, Mukono district**

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DECLARATION

I, NanyongaTeopista, do declare that this research proposal is my personal work and has never been presented by any person for any academic award to any institution of higher learning.

Signed -----

NanyogaTeopista

Date -----

This research proposal has been submitted for examination with my approval as the supervisor

Signed-----

Ssemaata Donald

Date-----

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter entails the background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, study objectives and questions. The scope of the study is also provided and significance of the study.

1.1 Background

Religious education (RE) as it is taught in the schools of Uganda today has three main aspects. First, it seeks to enable pupils to develop a knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices. Since Christianity has played such a significant part in the historical development of this country, its beliefs and practices feature prominently in the RE programme of most schools. However, the law makes it clear that pupils should also be given opportunities to develop an understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of the other major religions represented in Uganda as well. The religions that are usually taught in schools include Islam in addition to Christianity. It is not suggested that all these religions have to be taught to young pupils at the same time. In fact, it would be foolish to do so. Which religions and at what level they will be taught obviously depend on the age of the pupils, the nature of the school and the stipulations of the locally agreed syllabus. What is important is that pupils learn what it is like to be an adherent of a religion practiced in the world today.

The second aspect of the subject is its contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Spirituality is a complex area, which transcends any definition. The best we can do is to describe some of its aspects. Spirituality is concerned with what it is to be human and to make sense of life's experiences. It involves trying to find answers to such fundamental questions as 'Is there life after death?', 'Why am I on this earth?', 'Why do innocent people suffer?', and 'What is right and what is wrong?' It is concerned with the development of personal beliefs and appreciating the beliefs of others. Experiencing a sense of awe and mystery is another key aspect. It also involves making sense of human relationships and, for some, making sense of a relationship with God. A further aspect is responding to challenging experiences. Whilst every area of the curriculum has the potential to contribute to children's spiritual development, religious education by its very nature is a key contributor.

The third aspect of religious education is exploring and responding to religion. This involves the development of positive attitudes and skills. Key skills are defined variously from publication to publication but typically include investigation, empathy, synthesis, interpretation, evaluation, application, reflection, analysis, and expression. The following are characteristic of the key attitudes included for personal development: commitment, fairness, respect, self-understanding and enquiry (SCAA, 1994a and 1994b).

A religious education programme consisting of these strands can make a very positive contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It can also help to prepare them for life. Such an educational programme is relevant to all children, regardless of their religious or cultural background.

Religious Education (RE) as a subject within the Ugandan primary curriculum has been undergoing a shift since its inception, which can be traced from the arrival of the missionaries. Despite all these changes, it is notable that students' academic performance in RE still remains unsatisfactory.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Pupils' academic performance in RE has been declining over the years since the introduction of the multi-faith based RE syllabus in that uses the interpretive approach. Speculations have been made for the low performance and they include; teachers' lack of content and pedagogical knowledge and inadequate assessment skills. Furthermore, the studies show that students do not perform well due to problems associated with their family background and general school environment (Egalite, 2016; Foley, 2008; Schaps, 2005). This study therefore will explore causes of the decline in the performance of the RE at lower primary level in selected primary schools in Kasaawo, in Mukono. The study will be guided by two key research questions.

1.3.0 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine pupil's academic performance in lower primary section in relation to the teaching styles and curriculum.

1.3.1. Research questions

- i).How effectively do pupils in lower primary section perform in R.E in lower sections of primary schools in KasawoSub County, Mukono district?
- ii).What factors cause a decline in academic performance of Religious Education (RE) in lower primary section?
- iii)What are the possible solutions to the identified causes of decline in pupils’ academic performance Religious education?

1.4Objectives of the study

- i).To establish how effectively pupils perform in R.E in lower sections of primary schools in Kasawo sub count, Mukono district.
- ii).To find out the causes of the decline in academic performance of Religious education in lower primary section in Kasaawo sub county, Mukono district
- iii).To find out the possible solutions to factors that causes a decline in pupil’s academic performance of Religious education in, Kasaawo sub county, Mukono district

1.5.0 Scope of the study

The study will be conducted in Kasaawo Sub County, Mukono district among pupils of lower primary section.

1.5.1 Content Scope

The study will examine the challenges facing good academic performance in R.E especially in lower classes of the primary section.

1.5.2 Time Scope

The study will examine the trend of pupil’s academic performance in lower primary section in religious education from 2015 to 2017.

1.5.3 Limitations of the study

The findings of the study may be affected in a sense that some teachers and pupils may not give genuine responses for fear of being reprimanded. However, the researcher will assure them of confidentiality of their responses.

1.5.4 Delimitation of the study

The study will be conducted to some sampled UPE-schools inKasawo Sub County which has a population of sixteen primary schools. It will confine itself to lower section of primary schools’

children in UPE schools, lower section primary teachers, parents and head teachers in the sub county.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study will benefit or assist the department of Religious Education both at school and ministerial levels and specifically in teacher training and development by identifying issues of concern and problems faced by teachers in the teaching and learning of Religious Education. It will provide relevant information to the Department of Teacher Training and Development on how to develop relevant and efficient in-service training programs for RE teachers especially in relation to assessment. Similarly, it will provide information to RE

Definition of Key terms and Acronyms

Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals

Assessment In education, the term **assessment** refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of pupils.

Assessment methods are the strategies, techniques, tools and instruments for collecting information to determine the extent to which students demonstrate desired learning outcomes

Curriculum:-The term **curriculum** refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific **course** or program.

Empathy is the "capacity" to share and understand another's "state of mind" or emotion.

Pedagogical Knowledge:-is the integration of subject expertise and skilled teaching of that particular subject.

Acronyms

L.O.I;-language of Instruction (the language which teachers use to communicate with learners in the classroom)

PLE;-Primary Leaving Examinations

R.E;-Religious Education

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Academic performance is mainly related to assessment and it is about a pupil's success or lack of it in meeting short- or long-term goals in education. How pupils perform reflect how well they have mastered the content taught (Ballard & Bates, 2008). However, there are various factors that ensure and are considered to be hindering good performance in educational settings. Some of these factors are; language as a medium of instruction, teaching and learning resources, parental involvement, study habits, class size, teachers' pedagogical and assessment skills (Farooq, Chaudry, Shafiq&Berhan, 2011). It has been observed that since the introduction of the multi-faith curriculum in 1996 in Uganda, RE pupils have been performing poorly (Dinama, 2010).

Pupil academic performance is of paramount importance in every academic institution (Regier, 2011) and that is why the pupils' academic performance in RE remains a top priority for educators in religion. This is because when pupils achieve good grades, they become competitive in the world of work and may have better employment opportunities.

2.1 Pupil's academic performance in R.E Lower primary Section in Kasaawo Primary Schools

The teaching and learning of RE in primary schools reveals that the subject has continued to be less popular among pupils in Kasawo primary schools. A.B.Kasozi (2002), on the quality of primary education in Uganda, notes that the challenge associated with the teaching of subjects like RE is perceived by learners as having a minimal contribution to the job-market. This is worsened by the fact that the subject is not a prerequisite for entry to highly ranked professional courses like medicine, engineering, law and computer science once pupils have joined secondary school level. Many pupils are being advised by parents to focus much attention on Mathematics and science subject. Some people believe that CRE is an easy subject for pupils to pass and offers no job prospects except becoming preachers or teachers of CRE (Chemutai, 2008).

This negative feeling towards the subject has also affected RE teachers and pupils in that some shy away from the subject while others feel it is a subject for the female (Christian Educator,

1993, December). This requires a reexamination of the subject in order to establish what has tainted its image. A study by Ogula (1994) to examine the attitude of parents, primary teachers and pupils in Kampala towards Social Studies curriculum in relation to pupils' achievement has found out that most teachers used the lecture method which made lessons boring making pupils develop a negative attitude towards the subject and hence poor academic performance. This poses a challenge to the teaching and learning process of any subject and particularly CRE. Nzomo (2011) urges teachers to improve their competence through training since it helps one develop skills, character and ultimately better their profession.

2.2 Causes for the decline in Pupils Academic performance of R.E in the Lower Primary Section

There are various factors that contribute to good pupil academic performance in a subject and these may include:

2.2.1. Poor competence in English language by Learners in Kasawo primary schools

Although all children in Kasaawo theoretically have access to English, only those attending good quality English-medium schools or who receive good quality private tutorial in English attain competence in the language and perform well at primary and post-primary level. The LOI plays a crucial role in learning, as Malekela (2003) observed that if the learner is handicapped in the LOI, then, learning may not take place as the instructor and the learner will not be communicating effectively. Therefore, the overall performance of pupils in Kasaawo depends on the LOI to a great extent. If pupils have strong communication skills and have strong grip on English, it increases their academic performance in other subjects including Religious education. The performance of the pupils in R.E is affected by communication skills. In multi-cultural settings, students bring along with them different languages that if not acknowledged by the educational system may impede academic learning resulting in poor performance (Harb and El Shaarawi, 2006; Jotia&Pansiri, 2013; Nyathi- Saleshando, 2011; Pansiri, 2011). All these various learners speak different indigenous languages and bring with them a wide range of cultural traditions that can be of value to their learning if they were incorporated in the education system. However, their mother tongue is not used as a medium of instruction in both public and private schools in Botswana. As Khan (2014)

2.2.2. Teachers pedagogical skills

A study by Dinama (2010) on RE teaching in Botswana public schools reveals that teacher's inadequate pedagogical skills result in students' poor academic performance. For example, as they taught teachers chose to focus on religions that they favoured even though that was not the expectation of the core curriculum. Furthermore, teachers struggled to draw on student knowledge as a resource (Dinama, 2010). In the same study, Dinama (2010) observed that Religious Education teachers possessed poor assessment skills in terms of poorly written test items. For example, he cited incidents where internal monthly, termly tests and external examinations did not correlate.

The cause and source of this could be that teachers do not possess adequate assessment skills and this is reflected in the poor final national RE examinations results. For example, at school level, students would get very high marks in school-based tests and examinations while obtaining low grades in the final national examinations (Dinama, 2010). In addition, inadequate pedagogical knowledge and assessment skills, teachers' lack of collaboration with one another are amongst some of the causes of students' poor academic performance. In addition, a study carried out by Burry-Stock (2003) revealed that teachers' assessment practices were inadequate to meet the demands of classroom assessment due to insufficient or lack of training in assessment.

Besides, there has to be a good match between pupils' learning preferences and teacher teaching styles which have been demonstrated to have a positive effect on pupils performance (Harb & El-Shaarawi, 2006).

2.2.3. Lack of Parental Involvement

Ballard and Bates, (2008) point out that for assessment to be effective, students, parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers and researchers need to share responsibility in educational matters. Thus, parental involvement is core to students' academic success (Pansiri, 2008; William & Jeynes, 2007). Parents' attitudes towards education can influence pupil's performance. Pansiri (2008) further posits that parental participation in school curriculum matters permits them to learn strategies of helping their children hence an enhanced students' performance. Actually, there is a connection between parental association and the children's accomplishment in the classroom.

2.2.4. Lack of Resources

Learning resources are identified as yet another factor determining pupils' academic performance. Karemera, Reuben and Sillah (2003) found that pupils' academic performance is significantly connected to the availability of educational resources like library, computer laboratory and textbooks in an institution. Godfrey (2012) notes that resources are vital since they do inform and guide teachers in their teaching. This is true in the context of Kasaawo in Mukono district because resources like textbooks are limited leading to learners writing their final examinations without having accessed them thus affecting their academic performance. Poor results in RE in Uganda is also attributed to the absence of core text books which cover the content of the curriculum fully (Dinama, 2010). Even in instances where textbooks are available, teachers rarely explore other readily available resources, such as the library and the internet, to increase their own and their students' knowledge about religions. Inadequate learning infrastructure lead learners having their lessons carried out in places such as laboratories, libraries, out-door spaces and school dining-hall that are not designed to be classrooms (Archibald, 2006). Inadequate resources impinge on classroom activities and instructional techniques since a large number of pupils will be squeezed in the few available classrooms. In their study, Bandiera, Larcinese, and Rasul (2010) noted that class size is a factor that impacts pupils' academic performance.

2.2.5. Teacher-student ratio

In addition, the teacher-student ratio has a bearing on how teachers attend to individual students because if an average student is moved to a large class his or her performance will necessarily drop (Bandiera, Larcinese&Rasul, 2010) due to inadequate attention by the teacher (Monks & Schmidt, 2010). Teacher-student ratio therefore negatively affects students' academic performance (Yelkpiri, Namale, Esia-Donkoh&Ofosu-Dwamena, 2012). If the class is too large the teacher will naturally fail to adequately interact with all learners and would not be able to fully engage them into the various classroom activities.

Moreover, students' academic performance can be affected by entry points of the previous performance at a lower level (Geiser&Santelices, 2007) since ideally a selection rank based on a student's overall academic achievement is the best single predictor of future success.

Sentamu(2003) adds that, measures of prior educational performance are the most important determinants of student performance. This implies that the higher the previous performance, the likelihood that the students will perform better academically in future. This is true in respect of the Botswana education system because students are automatically promoted after completion of their Standard Seven regardless of the grades they would have achieved and this in turn is reflected in their poor junior secondary school results (Dinama, 2010). In addition, Reyann, (2011) argues that a grade is a primary indicator in learning and if a learner earns high grades it is concluded that he or she has learnt a lot while low grades indicate learning to a lesser extent. Dinama, (2010) further observes that, throughout his fieldwork in research about implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum, the poor results in RE at national level were a common concern among teachers. This is worrisome because students come with poor results from primary schools due to automatic progression and after final examinations teachers are expected to account for the results, as well as the value they would have added to the results of these students upon entering secondary school classrooms.

2.3 Possible Strategies to overcome the Causes of decline In Academic Performance of R.E in lower primary section of Kasaawo primary Schools.

1. Teachers in lower primary section should always vary their teaching methods and avoid monopoly of using teacher-centered methods of teaching. Learner should be given more time to participate actively in class.
2. Both the central and local government should train more teachers in primary schools so as to minimize on the acute shortage of teachers so as to address the problem of big number of pupils whose ratio to that of the teachers is abnormally beyond the set standard.
3. The ministry of education in charge of the primary section should supply more text books to schools in order to minimize the existing gap in most primary school libraries. In fact in Kasaawo Sub County, there are few schools with fully functioning libraries.
4. Parents should be encouraged and reminded about their primary responsibility of monitoring the progress of their children in schools rather than leaving everything for the teachers at schools. Since “charity begins at home” the first stage of learning starts from home, parents ought to play their part and the teachers do their part.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design, target population, the sample and Sampling procedure, development of research instruments and finally data Collection and data analysis procedure.

3.2 Research design

This study will adopt both a quantitative and qualitative methodology which expects the researcher to explore in depth explanations of issues to comprehend an issue in its natural locale as well as to learn from the experiences of the participants (Chilisa&Preece, 2005). The study will employ a case study research design since it will assist the researchers in exploring the students' performance and the use of numerous sources of evidence (Yin, 1984).

3.3 Target population

The case study will be conducted in three schools that are in Kasawo Sub County and for confidentiality purposes will be given pseudonyms namely Kasawo model primary school, Little doves primary, and auntie Polly and molly primary schools. The researcher will target the following; Parents, pupils and teachers

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The study will employ a purposive sampling of participants in the selected schools. The participants will be six (6) Religious Education teachers in three (3) junior primary schools in Kasawo who have been in the field for a minimum of five years and were specialists in RE. Long serving teachers will be chosen because teaching experience of typically five years or more is associated with an internalization of a curriculum and a record of pupil's academic performance. In each school there will be a focus group discussion of fifteen (15) pupils. Pupils will be chosen because they are in a good position to articulate their academic performance and the challenges they encounter in learning RE.

3.5 Research Instruments

The researchers will use Questionnaires to gather information. Interviews will be used in order to understand the lived experiences of teachers and parents, and the meaning they make of these experiences. Kvale (2004) states that interviews help obtain descriptions of the lived world of the participants with respect to interpretations of the meaning of the phenomena under investigation.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Validity refers to how well a test tool measures what is supposed to measure while reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consisted results, Mugenda and Mugenda (1999). Validity and reliability will require piloting of research instrument to test their workability before the researcher goes to the field to collect the data using them.

3.6.1 Validity

In this study, the researcher will pilot the instruments before administering them to the respondents using test re-test method using a few sampled pre-schools to test their workability.

3.6.2 Reliability

To maintain reliability in this study the researcher will use test -retest technique where the researcher will use instruments under the same conditions to collect data from a few respondents twice after an interval of one week and then compare the findings of the first and second administering.

3.7 Procedure for data collection

After preparing the research instruments, the researcher will seek permission from the relevant authorities through introductory letter from Kyambogo University. Then a clearance to carry out the research study will be obtained from the district education officer. Permission from the relevant authorities Head teachers from my school and the sampled schools will be sought. Then after getting permission the researcher will visit all the sampled pre-schools to deliver the questionnaires to head teachers and pre-school teachers due for collection on the agreed date after they have filled the necessary data,

3.8 Data analysis

The data collected will be organized along research objectives so as to attach themes to it. Both percentages and frequencies procedures will be used to analyze the data. The researcher will use tables and figures to provide interpretation of data quantitatively.

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APPENDICES: RESEARCH TOOLS

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Pupils

Dear sir/madam,

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions about the challenges affecting good academic performance of religious education in your school .Your responses will be handled with utmost confidentiality.

Section A

Please tick/write the appropriate response in the space provided.

1. Gender

Male ☐

Female ☐

2. Age

Less than 5 years. ☐ 10 years 41-☐years 51- 60 ye☐

3. Marital Status

Married ☐

Single ☐

Section B:Pupil's academic performance in R.E

4. What grade mark did you get in R.E last year?

5. How has your school performance trend in R.E been like in the last 3 years?

Increasing ☐ Constant ☐ Decreasing ☐ Irregular ☐ No idea ☐

6. What was the position of your school in the district in R.E last year?

7. Was this an improvement from the previous year?

Yes ☐ No ☐

8. How many of you share one text book in C.R.E?

9. Does your teacher reward pupils if they perform well in Christian religious education?

Yes ☐ No ☐

10. Does your teacher check your lesson notes and assignments?

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Does your parent assist with your homework?

Yes ☐ No ☐

a) If yes, how

b) If no, Why

12. Does your parent attend school meetings to discuss academic performance?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(a) If no, how does it affect your academic performance?

(b) If yes, how does it affect your academic performance?

13. a) Does your parent provide any text book?

Yes ☐ No ☐

b) If no, how does it affect your academic performance?

14. a) Does your parent provide you with writing materials?

Yes ☐ No ☐

b) If no, how does it affect your academic performance?

Thank you for filling the questionnaire

Strategies to overcome the Causes of decline In Academic Performance of R.E

How would you like to be assisted to improve in religious education?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Parents/ Guardians

SECTION A: BIO-DATA

1. Gender ☐

2. Age

Less than 25 years. ☐ 5– 10 years ☐ 41– 50 years ☐ 51– 60 years ☐

3. Marital Status

Married ☐

Single ☐

SECTION B

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

4. What grade did your child's school get in RE last year?

5. Do you think that the child has improved?

Yes ☐ No ☐

6. How has your child's school performance trend in PLE been like in the last 5 years?

Increasing ☐ Constant ☐ Decreasing ☐ Irregular ☐ No idea ☐

7. What was the position of the pupil's school in the class in RE last year?

8. Was this an improvement from the previous year?

Yes ☐ No ☐

9. Do you attend school meetings to discuss your child's academic performance?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(a) If no, how does it affect your child's academic performance?

(b) If yes, how does it affect your child's academic performance?

13. a) Do you provide any text book?

Yes ☐

No ☐

b) If no, how does it affect your child's academic performance?

14. a) Do you provide your child with writing materials?

Yes ☐

No ☐

b) If no, how does it affect your child's academic performance?

Appendix C: Teachers interview guide

1. Gender ☐

2. How long have you taught at this school?

Less than 2 years. ☐ 2 – 5 years ☐ 6– 10 y☐s 10 years and ☐
above

3. Marital Status

Married ☐

Single ☐

SECTION B

Academic performance

How has been the academic performance of pupils in R.E in this school in the last three years?

What factors do attribute for the poor academic performance in R.E in this school

What measures have you and the school put in place to avoid future poor academic performance in R.E

Thank you

Appendix D: Time frame

Time (period)	Activity
March 2018	Choosing a research topic
may 2018	Identifying literature
June 2018	Writing and editing proposal
September 2018	Submitting proposal
Nov 2018	Pilot study and testing of instruments
Feb 2019	Data collection
March 2019	Report writing
May 2019	Report submission

Appendix E: Budget

S/n	ITEM	quantity	price
1	stationery		40000
2	Printing and binding		150000
3	transport		40000
4	Research assistant		100000
5	feeding		50000
	total		380000