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The Influence of Regional Location of Kasese District on Access to University Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the influence of regional location of Kasese District on access to university education. The research used a descriptive study design on a sample of 98 respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides and analysed using frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that regional location factors affected access to university education such as distance to universities. The results from this research showed that distance to the university is one of the major factors affecting accessibility to university education. This paper recommends that the government should endeavour to improve the education standards in rural schools by improving teachers' motivation through accommodation and other social amenities.

Keywords: Influence, regional location, education, university and Kasese.

INTRODUCTION

Initially, university education in Uganda was considered a public good freely provided by government. However, since the late 1980s and early 1990s, increasing demand for higher education amidst declining budget allocations to public universities are among other reasons that created ideal conditions for establishment of private universities [1, 2, 3]. Although Uganda has seen an increase of private (i.e. fees-paying) university students, majority who benefit are found in urban areas [4, 5]. All private universities offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees predominantly in the humanities, with a few institutions offering postgraduate programmes in the humanities and soft sciences. With the country's high population growth and the introduction of universal primary education and universal secondary education, the demand for higher education continues grow [6]. In addition, the demand for higher education in Uganda is likely to increase as a result of such factors as the increases in household incomes, the growing recognition of the role of higher education in national development and the expected high private returns to higher education [7]. Location factors were looked at such as distance to the university, rural location, ethnic background and social status of people in Kasese district. Disparities in access to higher education persist regionally within countries, driven by factors such as wealth, location and gender," says UNESCO [8, 9]. Unequal access to university education is likely to persist in most countries globally despite concerted attempts to expand opportunities by 2030, where increase in access to and attainment of quality tertiary education is central to ensuring better living conditions and getting access to specialized and better-paid jobs, [10]. This means that inequality to access university education at national and international level translates to the local levels. It may appear that all individuals have an equal opportunity to compete for admission to university education through the meritocratic selection process [11] i.e passing national high school examination. However, students from rural areas and especially those off central Uganda may not have same competitive edge as those students in the national or high

cost schools located in administrative and urban areas [12].

There is also growing evidence that there is a relationship between family background and access to university education across many countries in the world [13]. For instance from the Romanian census, it showed that students from poor and rural regions and less educated families were less likely to enter and complete university education even when the government postponed the timing of tracking into academic and vocational schools. Like any other country in Africa, in Uganda entrance into the university education is determined by access to quality secondary school education [14]. Thus, most students selected to joining public universities as regular students are from higher quality secondary schools. It is important to note that quality secondary schools are also dominated by students from high cost private primary schools. The government of Uganda in order to promote equity in access to university education introduced quota system to enable admission of students from each district [15]. However, few students on this provision benefit and at the same time you may fail to find the student with required entry points from certain districts. Household income is another important determinant of the decision to continue studying after secondary education. Most studies have found that the higher the household income, the higher the demand for post-secondary education as well as the propensity to be in school after the secondary level [15]. Educational attainment of parents and/or their occupational status are sometimes used either to proxy this income effect or to capture the independent positive influence it has on youngsters' decisions to attend higher education [16, 17, 18, 19]. Finally, human capital theory also predicts that, ceteris paribus, myopic people are less likely to go to college than forward-looking people, and that most college students are young [20]. Participation in higher education is restricted to the more capable students, who also happen to be more productive. The type of secondary school that students attend may determine how likely the student is to enroll in higher education [21, 22]. The direction of this effect varies, however, between countries and with the structure of the educational system. The social status of the neighbourhood where the high school is located has a positive effect on youngsters' attendance of higher education institutions [23].

Aim of the study

To establish the influence of regional location of Kasese District on access to university education.

Research question

How has the regional location of Kasese District influenced access to University education?

Geographical scope

Kasese District is located along the equator. It is bordered by Kabarole District to the north, Kamwenge District to the east, Rubirizi District to the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. It is estimated that in 2012, the population of the district was approximately 747,800 people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [10]. There are 85 secondary schools (22 Government aided, 33 private and with 30 under public-private partnership. There are 7 tertiary institutions (one university study centre and 6 colleges). Kasese District was chosen because of the researcher's experience with the teaching and learning environment, most teachers in secondary schools come from other districts other than Kasese itself.

Time scope

The study focused on students at the university who finished Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education between 2014 and 2016. These

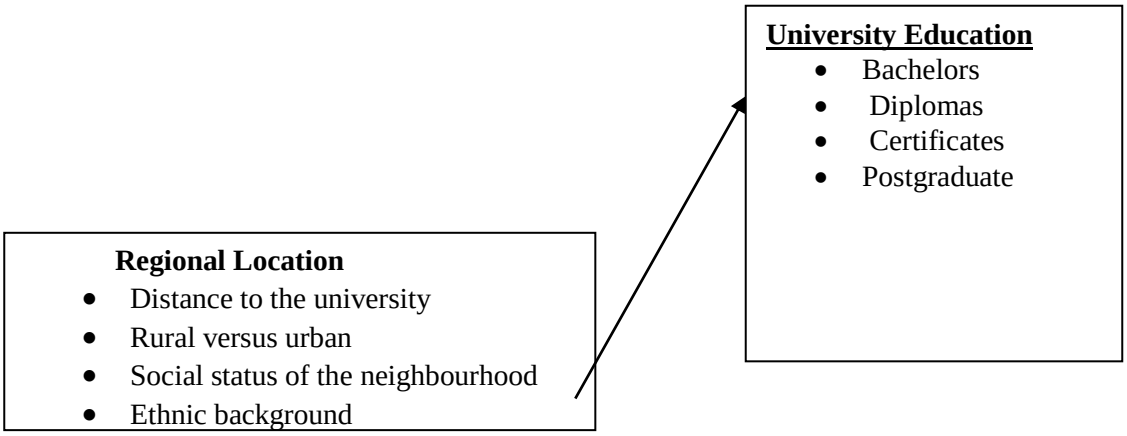
included university students in year one up to the fourth year. This time period was chosen because such university graduates know the factors that determined their access to university education.

Significance of the study

The study might add more knowledge in the area of university education career management, financing and ensuring equity in access to university. The results of the study might be useful to schools and parents to improve on ways of career guidance for students. This is especially in choosing the university, the courses or programme to study. The recommendations may be used to stimulate policy debate among various education stakeholders in Kasese District on how to improve access to university education by students from rural secondary schools. This eventually may help to identify solutions to the low rate of participation in university education by student from rural secondary schools in Kasese. The study might be used as a reference by the subsequent researchers who will come to study in the same area and under the same topic of access to university education. Study findings may be used by the community to understand some of the factors affecting students from rural secondary schools in attainment of university education.

Conceptual Framework

Accessibility to university education



(Source: Researcher, 2017 based on [17])

Figure 1: Conceptual frame work showing accessibility to university education by students from rural secondary schools

From figure 1, above access to university education is influenced by many factors. The framework considers access as ability of a student to join the university and acquire skills such as technical, human, design and conceptual skills that would enable him or her to live in elite and non-elite environment after study. When students access university education (i.e studying courses at degree, diploma or certificate level), it assumed that both students, parents or the family and the community benefit from the outcomes of that education. This is because university education facilitates acquisition of skills and knowledge that increase productivity, efficiency and quality of life. This comes as a result of university education increasing the value of the graduates in the labor markets by getting well-paying jobs, earning high wages/salaries. Lack of access to university education by communities in Kasese District may result into; lack of trained professionals that spearhead socio-economic sectors' growth. Lack of opportunities to access university education may lead to under or undeveloped human resources, limited savings and low standards of living and loss of change associated

with university education. This eventually leads to slow rate of modernization and development.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A descriptive study design entailing collection of qualitative data on the selected variables was used. A descriptive research design observes, describes and documents aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs [21]. Descriptive research design was used because the researcher was concerned with describing affairs in as far as accessibility to university education of students from rural Kasese District was concerned. The data collection and analysis were concurrently done as suggested by [22]. The mixed method was used because data collection procedure involved two types (questionnaire and interviews).

Area of study

The study was carried out in Kasese District in South Western Uganda. The population of Kasese was 702,029 people. Of this 51.7% (363,233) were females and 48.3% (338,796) were males. The population growth rate in Kasese District in 2014 was 2.45%. There are 140,697 households in the district with a household size of 4.9 persons which is higher than the national average of 4.7. The rural population consists of 529,976 or 75.5% of the population while the urban population is 24.5%. In Kasese District, there are different ethnic groups like Bakonzo, Batoro, Basongora, Bamba and Banyarwanda [23]. Kasese district was chosen as a study area due to the factor that it is located far away from the Capital City Kampala with no university. Therefore the research was wondering how students from such an area really access university education.

Population of study

The population of the study was 146 including 128 students at the university, 10 head teachers, 3 registrars and 3 deans of students and 2 officials from the Kasese District Education Office. The district has five constituencies namely; Bukonzo East (5 government aided secondary schools), Bukonzo West (4 Schools), Busongora North (10 schools), Busongora South (5 schools) and Kasese Municipality (3 schools). Thus, Busongora North with 10 government aided secondary schools became the sampled area because it had many government aided secondary schools. Due to time and cost constraints, Busongora North was also selected because the researcher found it convenient to carry out the study on part of the population that was more accessible. In these schools, the number of students at university in 2014, 2015 and 2016 was 128.

Sample size selection and sampling techniques

The sample population for the students comprised 113 sampled based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table used for determining the sample size for a given population. Thus, the sample size is 113 respondents including; 95 students at university, 10 head teachers, one D.E.O and one District Inspector of Schools, 3 registrars and 3 deans of students as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Population and the sample size selected for this study

Category of respondents	Population	Sample	Sampling technique
Students sent to university from ten rural secondary schools 2014, 2015 & 2017	128	95	Krejcie and Morgan table
Head teachers	10	10	Purposive sampling
University Dean of students	3	3	Purposive sampling
University Registrars	3	3	Purposive sampling
District Education Officials	2	2	Purposive sampling
Total	**146**	**113**	

Source: Head teachers of 10 secondary schools in Kasese District, 2017

Krejcie and Morgan tables were used to select a sample of 95 university students that studied from rural secondary school in Kasese district. The study also purposely selected 10 head teachers from Busongora North schools, 3 University Deans of Students and 3 Academic registrars, 2 District Education Officials due to their knowledge and experience in interacting with students intending to join university education. In this case criterion purposive sampling was used where students at the university from Busongora North rural based secondary school were the focus. Criterion purposive sampling involves searching for cases or individuals that meet a certain criteria e.g have had a particular life experience as described by [24].

Data collection methods

The study collected data using interviews and document reviews. In-depth interviews were held with D.E.O, Inspector of schools, University Registrars and Deans of students from the three universities namely; Mountains of the Moon University, Kampala International University (Western Campus) and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. The research chose the three universities based on (i) closeness to Kasese District (2) Private and public university.

Data collection instruments

Questionnaires

A self-administered questionnaire with mainly close and some open ended questions were used to collect data from students at the University hailing from Kasese District.

Data quality control

Validity of instruments

To ensure validity of research instruments; pilot testing of copies of questionnaire was carried out in two schools of Kasese District. This helped to assess the language clarity, ability to tap information from respondents, acceptability in terms of length and ethical consideration for clients. Supervisors were requested to rate the instruments in order to discover their validity. In order to establish content validity, results from the ratings were computed using the following formula.

$$CVI = n/N$$

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of items in the questionnaire}}$$

Where: n = number of items rated as relevant
N= Total number of items in the instrument

This resulted into a Content Validity Index of 80%, meaning that the instrument was valid. Data collected was cross checked while still in the field to ensure that all questions were answered and contradictory information was removed.

Data collection procedure

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Post Graduate Directorate department of Educational Management and Administration to introduce her to the field. Afterwards, the researcher did a pilot testing of the research tools to check content validity. After corrections of any inconstancies, the researcher went straight to the universities selected to ask the students at the university hailing from Kasese. In the field, the researcher introduced herself and purpose of the research to the different categories of respondents. The researcher distributed the questionnaires and there after conducted interviews with the respective categories. At the end of each day, the researcher did preliminary analysis of data gathered in order to check for inconsistencies

Data Management

Data processing

Data from interviews guides was group to mark the underlying ideas where similar kinds of data were grouped together to form categories and themes according to (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This was done by picking out ideas, concepts and themes into categories. Finally, triangulation was used to validate data from different sources and to corroborate findings. On the other hand, data from questionnaires was coded.

Data analysis

During data collection, at the end of each day, the researcher did preliminary data analysis for interviews conducted in order to check for inconsistencies. After field work, data from the questionnaire was read and reread to understand participants' perspectives about research issues. It was then entered into the excel sheet and coded according to objectives. Then the responses were tabulated to create frequencies and generate percentages. The frequency tables, graphs and charts were used to present data and inferences made about the general population. Secondary data from the district and university administrators was useful in validating some of the respondents' responses.

Ethical considerations

The main ethical considerations were voluntary participation, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and privacy of the respondents. The rights and the welfare of the respondents were protected. The researcher tried to minimize risks to respondents as much as possible. In relation to holding interviews, the researcher felt the most important ethical considerations was to make clear instructions to the respondents that participation was entirely be voluntary, free to withdraw from the interview at any time and were kept strictly confidential by the researcher.

RESULTS

Response Rate

The researcher anticipated to collect data from 113 respondents including 95 for the questionnaire survey and 18 for the interviews. However, complete data was collected from 80 questionnaires and 16 interviews making a total response of 96. The response rate was as presented in table 2.

Table 2 Questionnaire response rate for the study

Instrument	Sample	Reached Respondents	Response rate
Questionnaire	**95**	**80**	**84%**

The data in table 2 shows that the questionnaire survey data was obtained from 80 (84%) respondents out of the originally selected 95 university students. This response rate was considered sufficient because [25] proposes that a response rate of 50% and above is acceptable in social research surveys.

Category of the respondents

The researcher contacted different categories of respondents. This was done in order to get different views from different people that have interfaced with university education as presented below.

Table 3: Category of respondents for the questionnaire

Category	Male	Female	Total
Students at the University	51	29	80
Percentage	**64**	**36**	**100**

Source: Primary data, 2017

Data was collected from 80 university students from Mountains of the Moon, Kampala International University-Western Campus and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. Table 3, shows questionnaire respondents based on gender. The results showed that the large category of university students hailing from Kasese District are males 51(64%) with few or nearly half females 29(36%). This suggested that the larger percentage of the respondents were males. However, despite the males being the larger percentage, the data collected was representative of both gender groups because the number of females was equally high and they effectively participated in the study.

Table 4 Category of respondents for interviews

Category	Male	Female	Total
Head teachers	8	2	10
Academic registrar	3	0	3
Dean of students	3	0	3
District Education Officials	2	0	2
Total	**16**	**02**	**18**
Percentage	**89**	**11**	**100**

Source: Primary data, 2017

From table 4, results show that most head teachers and administrators are males16 (89%) compared to females 02(11%).

Age distribution of respondents

An analysis on the age of the respondents was also done. The researcher considered the age level of the respondents in order to identify who participated in the study and the results are in the Table 5 here under.

Table 5 Age Distribution of University students

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
20 - 24Years	27	33.75
25 - 30 Years	43	53.75
31 - 35 Years	10	12.5
Total	**80**	**99.63**

Source: Primary 2017

From the Table 5, with regard to age groups of the respondents in years, the results showed that the is a good number 27(33.75%) of university students and a larger percentage 43(32.8%) was of the respondents who were between 25-30 years followed by 10(12.5%) who were above 31 years, This means that most of the respondents were above 20 years and therefore could easily reason on issues concerning university accessibility.

Table 6: Age distribution of Interview respondents

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
36 - 40 Years	8	44.44
41 - 45 Years	10	55.55
Total	**18**	**99.99**

Source: Primary data, 2017

The results in Table 6 indicate that the respondents in the age group of age group 36-40years were 8(44.44%), 41-45years were 10(55.55%), 26-30years. The results indicate that all the respondents were of competent age to answer the research questions and therefore this gave the researcher to consider the solicited views as valid and authentic in relation to the study.

Influence of regional location on access to university education

A number of regional factors were identified to influence access to university education. These include among others; distance to the university, rural location, ethnic background and social status of people in Kasese District.

Table 7: Table showing Influence of regional location on access to university education

Regional Location	Frequency	Percentage
Distance	34	43
Rural location	18	22
Ethnic background	8	10
Social status	20	25
Total	**80**	**100**

Source: Primary data, 2017

A group of 34(43%) of the respondents indicated that distance to the university is big factor in determining access to university education. An interface with interviewees showed that Students in Kasese District are located far away from existing universities both public and private. At the time of research, there was only one university study of Bugema University in Kasese District. This means that universities are at a distance and therefore if the parents do not have enough money to pay for tuition, upkeep at university and functional fees as well as accommodation, a student does not advocate for university education. Interview discussions revealed that when the university is within reasonable distance, at times, students study while staying at home, or at a relative's place or the parents keep sending food for the student in order to cut upkeep costs. Another group of respondents 18(22%) also indicated that being located in rural area is also disadvantage for the students wishing to attain university education. This is because, the students in rural Kasese even if they wished to attain university education through distance learning, it may be difficult because, they hardly access internet resources that would enable them use e-resources available at E-library, access websites as well as electronic journals. Thus, even some students wished to go for distance learning, it would be impossible.

Another 8(10%) of the respondents indicated that the ethnic background of the people living in Kasese such as the Bakonzo, Batoro, Basongora, Bamba and Banyarwanda. An interface with some of the head teachers majority of who are residents and citizens from Kasese district, argued that they are not favoured like the Banyankore, Bakiga or Baganda who hold bigger positions in the government. Thus, there was a perception that unlike the Banyankore, other tribes have not got equal chances of gaining university education. Also 20 (25%) of the respondents showed that the social status of many people living in Kasese District rural areas has a role it plays in access to university education. Discussions with the head teachers revealed that people who live in rural Kasese experience a relatively low and of poor quality although they have many resources surrounding them such us the national park, lakes, minerals like salt, copper, cobalt, mountains and rivers. They complain that they have not benefited from these mentioned resources as it should be although there is community sharing of the conserved resources.

DISCUSSION

The results about sampled demographic characteristics show that male respondents were the majority while age groups of 25 - 30 years were the majority and students at the university. The study triangulated views from different categories of respondents giving authenticity of the data as well as validity. The majority respondents were males because in most cases parents prefer to give priority for higher education to male child than gild child. There were many location factors identified as location such as; distance to the university, rural location of some areas in Kasese district, inaccessible resources like electricity, internet in rural areas, low socio-economic status and the perception that ethnic groups in Kasese are not considered by government. Kasese District being located far away from universities both public and private was the major reason for limited access to university education by students from rural secondary schools. There is only Bugema university study centre in Kasese District. This means that universities are at a distance and therefore if the parents' do not have enough money to pay for tuition, upkeep at university and functional fees as well as accommodation, a student may not advocate for university education. At the same time, being located in rural area is also disadvantage for the students wishing to attain university education. This is because, the students in rural Kasese even if they wished to attain university education through distance learning, it is difficult because, they hardly access electricity and internet resources that would enable them use e-resources available at e-library, access websites as well as electronic journals. Thus, even if some students wished to go for distance learning, it would be impossible. Students at the university also indicated that in communities of rural Kasese District, people live low and poor quality lives although there are many resources surrounding them such us the national park, lakes, minerals like salt, copper, cobolt, mountains and rivers. They complain that they have not benefited from these mentioned resources as it should be although there is community sharing of the conserved resources.

The finding related to what [23] said that higher education ultimately corresponds with levels of power within society and therefore students from rural areas failing to access university education is therefore an obstacle to power-sharing within their communities. Students from rural households face enormous barriers to accessing higher education in general and higher quality higher education institutions (HEIs) in particular. There are three stratifying factors; gender, socio-economic status, and region or location of origin that act to skew the low participation rate in favor of males, richer families, and urban households. At the same time access and equity in higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa are fundamentally determined by access to and the quality of secondary education.

CONCLUSION

Long distance to universities remains one the strongest location factor that limit students' access to university education by students from rural secondary schools in Kasese district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Educationists need to advocate for distance education especially for students located in distant and rural districts. And for this to be successful students attitudes also need to be changed that university education can also be accessed from private universities because they are also chartered by National Council for Higher Education. The government should endeavour to improve the education standards in rural schools by

improving teachers' motivation through accommodation and other social amenities.

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