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**FACTORS AFFECTING CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN SERVICE
DELIVERY PROCESSES IN LIRA CITY
CASE STUDY: EDUCATION SERVICE IN LIRA CITY EAST DIVISION**

A dissertation presented to

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Master of Arts in Development Studies

Uganda Martyrs University
Making a Difference

UGANDA MARTYRS UNIVERSITY

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DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE STUDIES, RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE

Master's Dissertation

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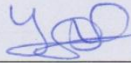
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Approval

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Submitted to the Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Enterprise

Dedication

This piece of work is dedicated to all my family members; parents, brothers and sisters who offered emotional, financial and technical support during this course. In a special way, I dedicate this work to my late Father Rev. Richard Ebunyu (MHRIP) who always encouraged me to go for more academic papers.

Special dedication goes to my dear wife Mrs. Nancy Ebunyu; my children, Shawn Ebunyu, Shanice Arengo and Shine Osika who missed me during my absence as I pursued the course.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AU	African Union
BoGs	Board of Governors
CDO	Community Development Officer
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
LC	Local Council
LGA	Local Governments Act
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Center
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NODPSP	National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy
NPA	National Planning Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P/S	Primary School
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMCs	School Management Committees
SMS	Short Message Services
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF United Nations Children’s Education Fund

UPE Universal Primary Education

UYONET Uganda Youth Network

WASH Water Sanitation and Hygiene

WHO World Health Organization

Abstract

The major objective of this study was to examine the factors influencing citizens' participation in education service delivery in Lira City East Division, with four specific objectives: to determine the magnitude and quality of education services, examine current levels of citizens participation, identify factors for insufficient citizens' engagement, and establish other factors responsible for the current state of education services. The research employed a mixed approach where qualitative and quantitative methods were used while combining descriptive and analytical designs. Data was collected from five public primary schools using questionnaires, interviews with teachers and duty bearers, focus group discussions with pupils and community members, document analysis of policies and school records, and direct observation of infrastructure conditions. The study engaged 74 respondents including learners, teachers, community members who were randomly identified while local leaders were purposively selected due to their knowledge of the subject matter. Qualitative data was analysed thematically while quantitative data was processed through frequency distributions and percentages. Key findings revealed severe infrastructure deficiencies, with overcrowded classrooms reaching teacher-pupil ratios of 1:99 and inadequate sanitation facilities averaging one latrine per 315 pupils. While 78% of respondents knew about the existence of School Management Committees, only 41.9% understood their formation process revealing gaps in transparency and engagement, and citizen participation remained largely tokenistic where parents are primarily limited to fee payments rather than meaningfully taking part in decision-making processes with 42.6% of respondents indicating no real involvement in decision-making. Systemic barriers such as ineffective communication by school leaders, gender related issues, low literacy level among parents, foundational and political interferences and elite capture of governance structures were preventing these bodies from effectively fulfilling their oversight roles. Academic performance suffered significantly, with only 41% of learners in some schools achieving Division 1 or 2 in national examinations highlighting broader consequences of limited participation and weak accountability. The study concluded that top-down policy implementation, weak policy implementation, social-economic and cultural factors, widespread corruption, and weak accountability mechanisms systematically excludes grassroots stakeholders from participation, leading to inequities in education service delivery in the Division. Recommendations emphasized urgent infrastructure investment to meet national standards, comprehensive capacity-building for School Management Committees, development of inclusive communication strategies including digital platforms and local radios, implementing existing policies and laws on participation and following strict anti-corruption measures aligned with Uganda's Education Act (2008). These findings contribute to broader policy discussions on decentralized governance and citizen empowerment, offering practical insights for improving educational service delivery and equity in urban Uganda and similar developing contexts.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study examined the relationship between citizen participation and effective service delivery, particularly in the educational sector of Lira City East Division. Understanding this dynamic is crucial, as citizens' engagement often significantly influences the efficacy and quality of public services. This chapter provides the comprehensive context for the research, including the background to the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, research hypothesis, scope of the study, significance of the study, justification of the study, conceptual framework, and definitions of key operational terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

Cornwall A. (2007) states that citizens' participation involves individuals and groups actively engaging in decision-making processes that impact their lives, particularly in the management of public services. This concept is underpinned by theoretical frameworks such as Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation and Public Participation Theory, which inform the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study (Arnstein, 1969).

Globally, numerous examples demonstrate how active citizen engagement can enhance public services, including education. For instance, Angreni and Mahyuni (2024) conducted research on community participation in achieving better living standards. Their findings indicated that public health education and active community service significantly contribute to improving health and quality of life.

To elaborate on the significance of citizen participation in education services, Tambunan, Siregar and Wahyuni (2021) emphasize the role of community service activities through the Tri Dharma program in higher education, which creates positive impacts. Their study showed that the active involvement of lecturers in community services can enhance students' awareness and improve the quality of education.

Service delivery in education is a cornerstone for sustainable development. However, according to Kidega and Zheng (2024), education service delivery in Uganda faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, limited citizens' participation and regional disparities in the supply of education. Despite these challenges, significant strides have been made in improving service delivery, particularly in the education sector. These improvements can manifest as better resource utilization, increased accountability, and enhanced educational outcomes (UNESCO, 2017).

Otim J. (2022) found that active community participation improves life quality and fosters a competitive environment, positively influencing educational quality. He further highlights how scouting contributes to personal development and positively impacts public services, including education, through hands-on experience, community service, and learning opportunities.

While substantial research exists on citizen participation and service delivery, there is a gap in context-specific studies, particularly in Lira City East Division. This study aims to bridge this gap by providing focused insights into how citizen engagement can specifically influence educational service delivery in this area.

Lira City in Northern Uganda has undergone significant socio-economic transformations since the end of the Lord's Resistance Army civil war. Specifically, the East Division has experienced high levels of urbanization, which impact public service delivery, including the education sector. Resource allocation, quality of education, and access to educational services are some of the unique challenges facing the education sector in Lira City.

Effective service delivery in education remains relevant towards attaining sustainable development (UNESCO, 2017). Within Lira City East Division, challenges like limited infrastructure, supply of teaching and learning materials as well as pathetic disparities on access to education services are common.

Research indicates that increased citizens' participation strongly correlates with improved service delivery outcomes (Yang, 2014). In the context of education, this can lead to better resource utilization, increased citizens involvement, and enhanced accountability among all parties involved, ultimately resulting in improved educational outcomes.

While extensive research exists on citizen participation and service delivery, there is a need for a paradigm shift to fully harness the potential of citizens' participation in a comprehensive manner. This gap is particularly evident in context-specific studies within regions like Lira City East Division. Therefore, this study aimed to bridge this gap by providing focused insights into how citizen engagement can specifically influence educational service delivery in Lira City East Division.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite existing legal frameworks for citizen participation, there is low engagement in education service delivery processes in Lira City East Division. Parents rarely monitor schools or attend meetings, and learners in public schools consistently achieve low grades in national exams. Records from the Principal Education Officer over the past three years show poor performance in national exams at Elia Olet, Ireda, Cura, Erute and St. Paul Primary Schools. These schools also face high learner absenteeism, apathetic parental attitudes, weak governance structures, and mismanagement of resources. If this trend continues, it could result in a disempowered citizenry and systematically poor education services.

There ought to have been active citizens participation in education service delivery through regularly attend meetings, monitoring school activities, and be involved in governance structures. This involvement can improve teacher-parent relationships, facilitate joint planning, bridge information gaps, enhance school management, and boost learners' performance. Therefore, it is essential to examine the factors affecting citizens' participation in education service delivery processes in Lira City East Division.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Major Objective

To establish the factors affecting citizens' participation in service delivery processes in Lira City.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To determine the magnitude and quality of education service delivery in Lira City East Division.
- ii. To examine the current level of citizens' participation in education service delivery processes in Lira City East Division.
- iii. To establish the factors responsible for citizens' insufficient participation in the education service delivery processes in Lira City East Division.
- iv. To examine other factors responsible for the current state of education service delivery in Lira City East Division.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. To what extent are citizens' involved in decision-making processes related to education services in Lira City East Division?
- ii. What are the current levels of citizens' engagement in education in education service-related activities in Lira City East Division?
- iii. What are the key factors that hinder sufficient citizens' participation in education service delivery processes in Lira City East Division?
- iv. What factors are responsible for the current state of education service delivery in Lira City East Division?

1.5 Scope of the Study

1.5.1 Conceptual Scope

The study focused on factors hindering parents from sufficiently participating in education service delivery processes in Lira City East Division targeting learners, parents, teachers, members of school governance and leaders of Lira City East Division. This targeted approach allows for a detailed examination of factors affecting citizens' participation and its impact on education service delivery.

1.5.2 Geographical Scope

The study was conducted in Lira City East Division in Lira City in Northern Uganda. Lira City is composed of two divisions namely Lira City West Division and Lira City East Division where this research was conducted. According to Lira City Education department, there forty-six (46) government aided primary schools; twenty-seven (27) schools are in Lira City East Division and nineteen (19) in Lira City West Division. Only five (05) schools were selected for this study.

1.5.3 Time Scope

The study focused on the period from 2014 to 2024 to identify trends, patterns, and changes in citizens participation and its effectiveness in education service delivery. This period is long to provide to provide relevant information since participatory processes take a period.

1.6 Significance of the Study

By assessing citizen participation and its impact on education service delivery, the study will help to identify areas for improvement. Understanding how citizen involvement influences education outcomes will inform policies and practices that enhance the quality of education in Lira City East Division.

Further, through the recommendations, the study will foster greater participation of citizens in not only education service delivery but in the public affairs of the country at large, helping to ensure that duty-bearers are more accountable, transparent and responsive in their actions and decision-making processes.

Furthermore, assessing how citizens' participation strengthens accountability of schools and education authorities to the community will help to empower local voices and to promote transparency, responsiveness, and improved decision-making in education service delivery in Lira City East Division.

Further still, the study will identify strategies for more efficient and equitable use of educational resources within Lira City East Division by analysing how citizen participation influences

resource distribution. This will ensure that funds target high-impact areas and thus bridging critical gaps and enhance student learning outcomes.

The findings of the study will provide actionable insights for education policies and governance, extending beyond Lira City East Division to similar regions. These findings will serve as a blueprint for integrating community voices into local education planning and delivery.

Finally, the study highlighted the best practices that can be used to institutionalize citizens engagement mechanisms across all service delivery sectors. The findings will equip policymakers with evidence on the value of inclusive governance and service delivery.

1.7 Justification of the Study

This study was crucial because it provided information that addresses a significant knowledge gap in education service delivery by investigating the mechanisms through which citizen participation influences education service delivery in Lira City East Division, offering context-specific insights with potential for theoretical transferability to comparable urban settings.

This study unearthed the unique challenges and opportunities in the education service delivery sector in Lira City East Division which ensured that education service interventions are tailored to the specific needs of all stakeholders involved in education service delivery. By examining the relationship between citizen participation and education service delivery, the research attempted to tackle fundamental aspect of community development and individual empowerment. The study highlighted the role of citizen participation in democracy and good governance which fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community, enhancing transparency and accountability in the education sector.

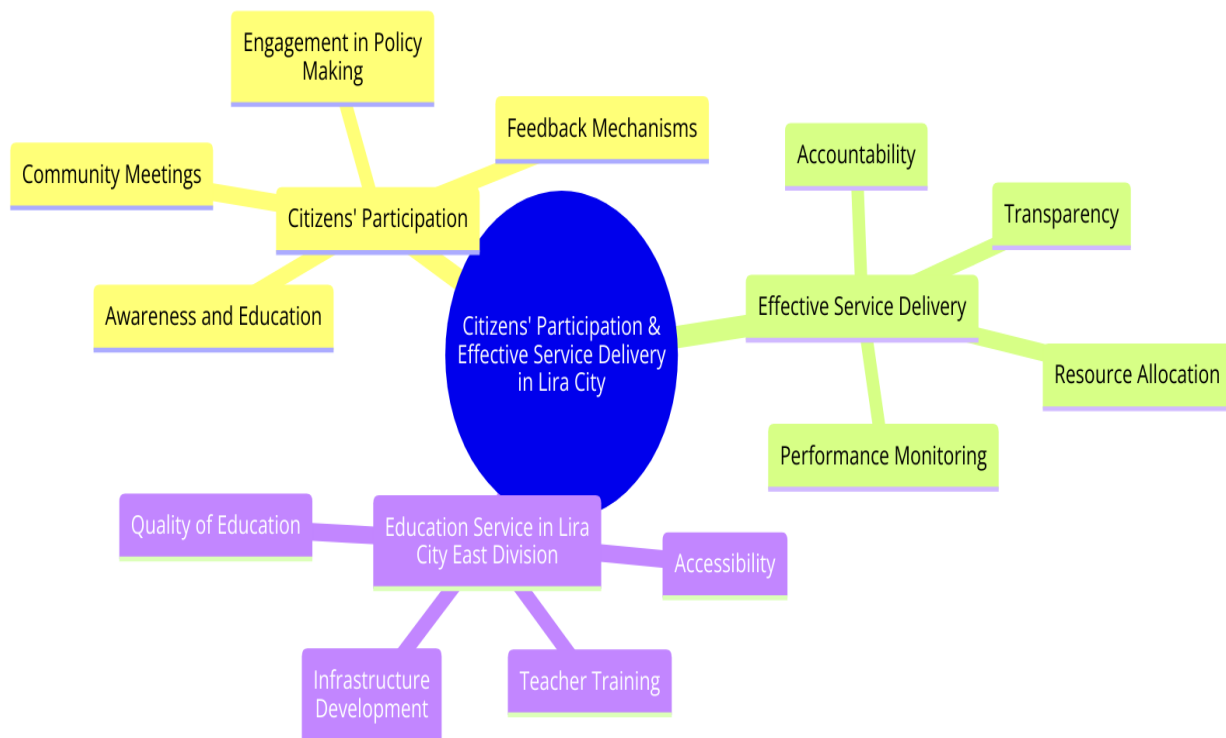
Furthermore, the findings will inform local policymakers and education authorities, guiding the development of policies that promote citizen engagement and improve service delivery. By addressing the lack of context-specific studies in urban areas like Lira City East Division, this research fills a significant gap in the literature and provides valuable awareness. The study's outcomes have the potential to benefit the broader community, with positive spillover effects into other areas such as health, infrastructure, and social services. Aligning the study with Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) underscores its global relevance and commitment to inclusive and accountable education systems, offering insights that can be applied to similar urban areas world

Finally, through analysis of citizen engagement models, this study generated evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening education service delivery processes and provides a framework for replicable participatory practices that intersect with broader local development priorities across all sectors of service delivery.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: (Adopted from Bainomugisha et al., 2017)

According to Figure 1, citizens’ participation is the primary factor being examined in this study to understand its impact on service delivery. Conceptualized as a branch in the mind map, it indicates that various types of citizen participation have differing effects on the quality and effectiveness of educational service delivery. The effectiveness of educational service delivery in Lira City East Division is the outcome influenced by citizens’ participation. The mind map

illustrates a direct consequence of citizen participation, indicating that varying levels of engagement lead to changes in how effectively educational services are delivered. The quality of education service is seen as a factor which will affect the strength of the relationship between citizens' participation and effective educational service delivery. This implies that the impact of citizen participation on the effectiveness of education service delivery varies depending on the existing quality of education services.

1.9 Definitions of Key Operational Terms

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation refers to the active involvement of individuals, residents, and community members in decision-making processes, policy formulation, and activities related to the provision of education services within Lira City East Division. The participation includes a variety of actions, such as providing feedback, attending meetings, participating in community initiatives, and collaborating with educational authorities (World Bank, 2023).

Community Empowerment

Richardson(2022) defines community empowerment as the process of equipping individuals and community with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to actively engage in decision-making processes and initiatives related to education service delivery in Lira City East Division. This process of community empowerment enhances the capacity of communities to influence educational outcomes.

Duty Bearers

These are individuals, institutions and authorities who are legally and morally mandated to ensure that quality education service is fulfilled in Lira City East Division. The persons may include public officials, private employers, donors, service providers, local leaders, community leaders and NGOs. The duty bearers are responsible for policy, formulation, implementation, resource allocation, and accountability in the education sector (UNFPA, 2014).

Education Service

UNESCO-IBE (2023) states that education service is the organized ecosystem of learning opportunities and support systems designed to nurture human development. At its core, this encompasses the daily interactions between teachers and learning in classrooms, where structured curriculum delivery combines with teaching expertise to facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Beyond the classroom walls, education service extends to the maintenance of school infrastructure ensuring that there are safe buildings, adequate sanitation, and functional learning spaces that meet basic educational needs (UNICEF, 2022).

Effective Service Delivery

According to the World Bank (2023) this refers to the equitable, efficient, and responsive provision of education services by government institutions and local authorities in Lira City East Division, resulting in positive outcomes for learners, teachers, and the community. It is measured by indicators such as equitable access of schools, efficient resource allocation, responsiveness of duty bearers, accountability and positive learning outcomes.

Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback mechanisms are structured channels and processes that allow citizens, parents, and community members to provide input, suggestions, and concerns regarding education service delivery in Lira City East Division. The OECD (2020) states that these mechanisms facilitate two-way communication between stakeholders and educational authorities, ensuring that community voices are heard and considered in decision-making in the planning and delivery of education service.

Resource Allocation

This refers to the strategic and equitable distribution of financial, human, and material resources in the provision of education service. This involves deliberate decision-making processes to ensure that schools and educational programs receive the necessary inputs to function effectively and achieve desired learning outcomes. Key aspects of this process include budgeting, staffing

decisions, infrastructure investment, and resource distribution to various schools and educational programs (World Bank, 2018).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the research topic. It explores related subjects and the findings of previous studies on assessing citizen participation in service delivery within the education sector. The literature was reviewed according to the objectives, theories, and conceptual framework, offering a comprehensive and informed perspective that enhances the researcher's theories and contributes to a deeper understanding of the research problem. The sources of the reviewed literature include secondary data from textbooks and internet journal articles, among others.

2.1 Theoretical framework for this research

This research is based on Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation which is the foundational theory that frames participation as a matter of power redistribution to the citizens but not merely involvement. The theory argues that without shifting power, participation becomes an empty ritual that frustrates the powerless citizens. The theory further states that citizens participation ranges from non-participation (manipulation and therapy), through tokenism (informing, consultation, placation), to genuine citizen power (partnership, delegated power, and citizen control) which reflects increasing levels of influence and control by citizens in decision-making processes.

2.2 The Magnitude and Quality of Education Service Delivery

The magnitude and quality of education are important aspects which determine the effectiveness of education across the globe. Magnitude can be understood to mean the scale and reach of education services including the number of schools, teachers' availability, learners and resources to facilitate learning while on the other hand quality focuses on the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system including the learning environment, the relevance of the curriculum, teachers' competence and learning outcomes. The current education trends have shifted to learner-centred education, hands on learning and provision of robust support systems.

2.2.1 The Concept of Service Delivery in a Local Government Setting

Service delivery refers to the provision of goods and services by government institutions to the citizens in an efficient and equitable and accountable manner. These services include education, health care, water, sanitation and infrastructure. Globally, decentralization has been a key strategy for improving service delivery by shifting responsibilities from central government to Local Government Authorities to enhance responsiveness and citizen participation (World Bank, 2019). According to the OECD (2021), successful models are found in Finland's education system and Brazil's participatory budgeting which demonstrates how empowered Local Governments can tailor services to community needs while maintaining transparency and accountability. Despite the major successes, challenges such as weak governance and corruption continue to hinder effective service delivery particularly in developing nations (UNDP, 2020).

In Uganda, services delivery is structured under the decentralized systems established by the Local Government Act (1997) as well as the Decentralization Policy which devolves functions like primary health education, health and road maintenance to districts, municipalities and cities (Ministry of Local Government, 2020). Despite the good framework to provide services through local governments, the governments continue to grapple with challenges such as inadequate funding, bureaucratic inefficiencies and disparities between urban and rural service access. Service delivery continues to cripple in the presence of policy makers and duty bearers tasked with monitoring service delivery at National and lower local governments.

In their report, UBOS (2022) stated while urban centres like Kampala have relatively better health care and education facilities, rural areas often face shortages of teachers, adequate medical personnel and clean water. These challenges are mirrored in Lira City and are exemplified by existing opportunities and constraints of local government service delivery. As part of the decentralization framework, Lira City is responsible for cascading the services to the citizens, but it is constrained by limited funding, rapid urbanization, infrastructure gaps.

2.2.2 Parameters for Quality Education Service Delivery

Quality education service delivery goes beyond mere access or going to school, but it ensures that learning is effective, equitable, and sustainable. To understand what quality education is, the literature below elaborates what quality education service delivery entails.

2.2.2.1 Adequate and Safe Learning Spaces

Education cannot Wait (2023) annual report states that quality education should include conducive learning environment with functional classrooms, electricity, clean water, sanitation facilities, and learning materials. However, schools in rural and conflict-affected regions such as Syria, Yemen, Somalia often lack these basics, leading to high dropout rates. Relatedly, in Uganda, many schools face similar challenges including limited classrooms leading to overcrowding and poor sanitation, affecting pupils' performance despite the existing policy on teacher – pupil ration of 1:53 (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019). Quality service delivery demands equitable infrastructure investment, especially for marginalized communities. In Uganda, while service delivery in education is considered a cornerstone for sustainable development, it is met by poor provision of infrastructure, lack of enough teaching materials and inequality in the supply of education in different regions (Oyoo, Okello, and Ojok,2012).

2.2.2.2 Qualified and Motivated Teachers

Quality education depends on competent, well-trained and motivated teachers who employ effective educational learning methods which include continuous professional development, fair remuneration, and supportive working conditions. On a global arena, studies show that teacher absenteeism and inadequate training such as in parts of India and Nigeria, where 75% of Grade 3 students could not read basic text severely undermine learning outcomes (World Bank, 2018).

This is not different with education service delivery in Uganda where the quality of education is compromised by multiple systemic challenges. Kwaga, Okello and Acire, (2019) argue that teacher motivation and performance are significantly affected by delayed salaries and inadequate training opportunities leading to high absenteeism rates that negatively impact learning outcomes. This is evidenced by the finding that 68% of Primary 3-5 pupils in Northern Uganda cannot read a basic sentence (UNICEF, 2022). The situation is particularly acute in East Division, where structural inequalities result in poorer school facilities compared to more central locations (Lwasa, Mugagga, Nabaasa and Musisi, 2021). With such challenges continuing to derail education services, there is a likelihood of limited citizens participation leading to ineffectiveness and poor learning outcomes.

2.2.2.3 Inclusive and Equitable Access of Education Services

The principle of inclusive education has gained global prominence where UNESCO (2023) is strongly advocating for systems that enable girls, children with disabilities and rural populations equally access education services. This global framework has informed various African Countries initiatives although implementation remains a challenge. The International Labour Organization (2021) states that quality education must be accessible to all citizens, regardless of citizens gender, socioeconomic status, or disability orientations. Barriers, such as poverty which pushes children into labour, especially in South Asia and gender discrimination as seen in Afghanistan and Somalia must be addressed through targeted policies. In Uganda, initiatives like universal primary education (UPE) have improved enrolment, but retention and quality remain challenges, particularly for girls and children with disabilities (UNICEF, 2021). Despite such provisions of inclusive and equitable education, gender disparities still exist in education service delivery fuelled by social economic factors such as early marriages, dropout rates, stereotypes and limited community participation to influence policy changes (UNDP, 2022).

2.2.2.4 Existence of Strong and Empowered Governance Structures

International organizations like the World Bank and UNESCO heavily advocate for decentralized school management system, arguing that local control improves accountability and responsiveness (World Bank, 2018). Case studies from Brazil's participatory budgeting in education (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2014) and Uganda's school management committees (Najjumba, Bunjo, Kyaddondo, and Marsden, 2013) show that when communities have real decision-making power, they can challenge bureaucratic inefficiencies and redirect resources to pressing needs. However, these successes depend on the willingness of central governments to decentralize power with financial support and the capacity of citizens to meaningfully participate.

While the post 2000 education reforms in Africa have increasingly emphasized community participation, outcomes vary widely. In Kenya, the introduction of free primary education in 2003 came along with School Management Committees which strengthened accountability albeit in some regions. A study conducted by Piper, Zuilkowski, Kwayumba and Strigel(2020) found that schools with active governance structures reported 20% lower teacher absenteeism. The

report also found that governance structures in marginalized north arid Kenya lacked training on governance, oversight which explained poor performance in primary schools in Northern Kenya.

Despite the presence of School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) in Uganda who play a crucial role in oversight and monitoring school performance, schools have not adequately enabled citizens participation in planning, implementation and monitoring of school programmes. The governance structures themselves do not receive frequent orientation on their roles due to funding challenges. Strengthening these structures with training and funding ensures that communities hold leaders accountable for education quality (Najjumba, et al., 2013).

There is a relatively low utilization of School Management Committees (SMCs) when it comes to negotiating education service delivery by citizens despite their mandated role under the Education Act (2008). This also corroborates an argument about the gap between formal accountability structures, and their practical implementation is eminently wide. Reports reveal that while some schools benefit from active PTAs that monitor teacher attendance, the urban slum areas continue to struggle with low community participation rates. These disparities suggest that social economic factors significantly influence the success of participatory governance models (Muhangi, Nkata and Ssenkusu, 2021).

2.2.2.5 Relevant and Engaging Curriculum

It should further be noted that quality education system should deliver a curriculum that is relevant to learners' needs and future employability. UNESCO (2020) report that centralized or out-dated curriculum risks producing learners who are not capable of confronting real-world social and economic challenges. In Finland for example, the education is flexible and allows learner centred approach that emphasizes critical thinking over memorizing which fosters critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Schleicher, 2019). The finish approach focuses on continuous assessment, interdisciplinary learning where subjects like technology, arts and sciences are integrated into the main curriculum. Wagner, Asmith and Brown (2021) reveals that many African countries including Uganda struggle with the curriculum stagnation where syllabi remain unchanged for decades despite technological and economic shifts.

Uganda's overreliance on the centralized National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) for curriculum development and governance has led to over 60% graduates without jobs. This is because graduates do not have market-oriented skills (UBOS, 2023). Although, Uganda recently integrated vocational training and digital literacy in the syllabi, the access and practice are still limited to a few schools in the urban settings as Nakabugo, Wasswa and Ssentamu (2022) state that the integration of vocational skills and technology in the curriculum could enhance workforce relevance.

2.2.2.6 Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective education system requires robust mechanisms for tracking progress and identifying challenges. Singapore's excellence model demonstrates how data driven systems can facilitate timely interventions in education service delivery (World Bank, 2022). The Singaporean's model has influenced many African countries though with varying degrees of success. For instance, Kenya's National Education Management System (NEMIS) represents one of Africa's more advanced monitoring frameworks, providing real time enrolment data to policy makers (MoE Kenya, 2023). By contrast Uganda's Education Management Information System (EMIS) struggles with implementation challenges including delayed data reporting which hampers evidence-based decision making (MoES Uganda, 2023).

2.3 Levels of Citizens' Participation in Service Delivery Processes

The concept of citizens' participation in service delivery processes encompasses various forms of engagement by individuals and communities in the planning, implementation and evaluation of public services. Participation can range from being informed about decisions to actively collaborate with government officials to shape policies and social services. When effectively implemented, citizens participation enhances service quality by ensuring responsiveness to local needs, improving transparency and strengthening government accountability (World Bank, 2018). For instance, in education, meaningful engagement of parents and local stakeholders in school governance has improved learning outcomes and resource allocation (Barrera-Osorio and Raju, 2020).

World Bank (2019) asserts that concept of effective service delivery in urban settings is central to the sustainability and quality of life within these communities. Theoretical perspectives on

participatory governance suggest that active citizen participation leads to improved service delivery outcomes. The inclusion of citizen voices in the planning, execution, and monitoring of urban services enhances accountability, transparency, and responsiveness among service providers.

2.3.1 Perspectives on Participation

The concept of participation in development has been widely regarded by different authors as a model that encourages top-down approaches to more inclusive community-led processes. The World Bank (2009) states that participation in development processes has been increasingly associated with development projects and programs, aiming to enhance their relevance, quality, and sustainability. Participation provides opportunities to citizens to influence and share control over development initiatives in their communities, including the decisions and resources that impact them. From this perspective, participation involves consultation and decision-making at all stages of service delivery from needs assessment to appraisal, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. A critical examination reveals fundamental tensions between these idealized visions and the realities of power dynamics in development practice. Citizens have not been given adequate information and timely information about participatory planning and in some cases, duty bearers come with premeditated decisions which discourages citizens from participating in subsequent engagements.

Lister (1998) views citizens' participation as private citizens getting involved in public service activities. Much as it is widely argued that Participation provides private individuals with the opportunity to influence public decisions, the implementation is still inadequate; this has been a component of the democratic decision-making process over a considerable time. More recently, the definition of participation in development has often been in development projects and programmes, as a means of strengthening their relevance, quality and sustainability. It is further perceived that citizen participation allows private individuals to influence public decisions, and it has long been a key element of democratic decision-making. Its origins can be traced back to ancient Greece and Colonial New England. Prior to the 1960s, government processes were designed to facilitate external participation. The processes of institutionalizing citizen participation started in around 1960s with President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs (Cogan and Sharpe, 1986).

Wampler and McNulty (2011) assert that citizen participation can take various forms. He states that indirect participation involves representation through elected leaders, which can be specifically targeted at special interest groups such as women, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, some of whom may be marginalized. Direct participation, on the other hand, involves personal engagement through platforms such as village meetings, local council meetings, budget conferences, and Barazas. These platforms enable citizens to directly partake in decision-making processes, including budgeting and development planning cycles. Additionally, there are instances where citizens and civil society groups collaborate with local government in policymaking through consultations and joint projects. Despite the existence of such platforms, the active participation of citizens is still insufficient (Cornwall, 2023).

In Uganda, citizen participation is accorded as a right. Article 38 of the Constitution thus states:

- i. Every Ugandan citizen has the right to participate in the affairs of government, individually or through his or her representatives in accordance with the law.
- ii. Every Ugandan has a right to participate in peaceful activities to influence the policies of government through civic organizations (The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995).

The Constitution ensures the involvement of citizens in the formulation and implementation of development plans (NODPSP X). It also establishes systems and processes that support the exercise of the right to participation. For example, it includes provisions for the operation and independence of NGOs and human rights organizations and mandates the state to facilitate their operations (NODPSP V (i-ii)).

Citizen participation is frequently regarded as a fundamental aspect of decentralization and is often presumed to be an inherent benefit of decentralization processes. However, community participation is rarely achieved through these processes, particularly among poor populations who face challenges such as illiteracy, poor health, hunger, economic deprivation, and inadequate infrastructure (Bagenda, 2007).

Thomas (1995) argues that local government leaders benefit from understanding the positions of specific community groups. Through regular contact with citizens who might not typically engage in the policy process, administrators learn which policies might be highly unpopular and how to avoid such failures. Policies that reflect citizen preferences are likely to be implemented

more smoothly and cost-effectively, as the public tends to be more cooperative when these policies are enacted. However, there has been continuous policy implementation challenges in Uganda when it comes to enforcing citizens participation across all sectors of service delivery.

According to UNDP (2001), citizens' political participation can be a powerful and transformative force for both political and socio-economic development. It plays a crucial role in establishing democratic norms and practices and encourages governments to develop responsive and accountable policies and programs.

Franklin, Lyons, and Marsh (2004) note that while voting is the simplest form of participation, it has remained stagnant in established democracies over the past several decades. Citizens are increasingly likely to distrust their political institutions, particularly legislatures, compared to a few decades ago. They are more inclined to believe that government performance has deteriorated and are less likely to identify with political parties, which are essential for translating public opinion into government action (Pharr and Putnam, 2000).

Cornwall (2026) adds that some citizens express a dislike for politics, preferring that politicians handle their responsibilities while they focus on their own lives. Generally, citizens tend to avoid conflicts and are uninterested in constant interactions with politicians who often prioritize their own issues and interests. In every society, representative democracy should be complemented by mechanisms for citizen participation which allows elected officials to better understand the needs and priorities of their constituents and fosters a sense of ownership among citizens regarding the services provided by the government.

Gaventa (2004) identifies new arenas for citizen participation across various levels. At the local level, democratic decentralization includes participatory planning, budgeting, and monitoring. At the national level, citizen involvement is seen in sectoral programs and poverty policy formulations while at the global level, citizens engage in policies of global governance, treaties, conventions, and summits.

Cornwall (2016) observes that citizen participation is facilitated by a comprehensive political project that includes an explicit ideological commitment to popular participation, along with legal and constitutional rights to participate. This is supported by dedicated bureaucrats, a robust and well-organized civil society, and effective institutional designs that incorporate procedures

for broad-based civil society engagement. However, the constitution and policies have not provided adequate support for citizens to participate due to challenges in their implementation.

Moore and Putzel (2002) argue that despite the emerging trends of citizens dictating the roles of government, there has not been support towards creating an enabling environment that incentivizes the poor to actively participate in service delivery processes. Whereas citizens are required to directly influence and exercise control in planning and executing programs in different service delivery sectors, their participation remains passive. Citizens continue to voice out their concerns of being sidelined by a section of leaders who politicize civil rights.

2.3.1.1 Schools-Arrangement Participation

The concept of school-arrangement participation is becoming a critical factor in improving education quality and accountability throughout the world. The shift towards participatory school governance gained momentum in the 20th century as part of the broader education reforms.

The World Bank (2004) report highlights that Australia and New Zealand improved their education standards by decentralizing decision making processes to relevant school level stakeholders. In Finland, the tradition of teacher autonomy and parents' involvement in curriculum development has been credited for creating the world's most successful education systems. In fact, several countries have benchmarked on Finland's school-based management. The Finnish model demonstrate that teachers, parents and learners have significant roles in school governance which leads to better learning outcomes.

In the Latin America, the adoption of school-based management model has led to improvements in infrastructure, teacher accountability in countries like Brazil and Mexico. There is high participation of citizens and active parent teacher associations (Carnoy, 2017).

Oketch, Mutisya, and Sagwe (2021) state that the involvement of citizens in school governance is evident in Kenya where the free primary education policy of 2003 included provisions for community participation, leading to the formation of School Management Committees (SMCs) who continue to play crucial roles in infrastructure development and teacher oversight of the learning chain in Kenya schools.

The Uganda's experience with Universal Primary Education (UPE) provides valuable insights into both the potential and limitations of school-arrangement participation in low-resource settings. While UPE significantly increased enrolment, the rapid expansion strained existing governance mechanisms. A study by Sasaoka and Nishimura (2019) in rural Uganda found that School Management Committees often lacked the training and resources to effectively oversee schools, leading to variations in implementation quality across districts. In some communities, local power dynamics resulted in elite capture of school resources, while in others, active parent-teacher associations successfully advocated for improved facilities.

Mugimu and Nabayego (2013) criticize Uganda's Universal Primary Education (UPE) program, highlighting that its top-down implementation often marginalizes grassroots input. This approach reduces genuine participation to mere symbolic gestures, undermining the potential for meaningful community involvement in the education process. The World Bank (2019) asserts that concept of effective service delivery in urban settings is central to the sustainability and quality of life within these communities. Theoretical perspectives on participatory governance suggest that active citizen participation leads to improved service delivery outcomes. The inclusion of citizen voices in the planning, execution, and monitoring of urban services enhances accountability, transparency, and responsiveness among service providers.

2.3.1.1.1 Parents' Participation

Research consistently shows that active parental participation in education is a cornerstone of education success (Epstein, 2018). Parents participate through school governance, providing home learning support, regular communication with teachers. While it is believed that parent's engagement significantly improves learners' academic performance, reduces dropouts and strengthens parent-teacher relationship, this functionality of strong Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) is cited in Finland and Singapore. OECD (2019) documented that the PTAs enhance school accountability, and resource mobilization, though critics note that these systems favour only middle-class families who can more easily navigate from school structures.

Across Africa, parental participation faces distinct challenges shaped by cultural norms and economic realities. For example, in Kenya studies reveal that while parental involvement in School Management Committees has improved infrastructure, participation remains dominated

by male elites (Oketch et al., 2021), while South Africa's mandated School Governing Bodies struggle with low rural parent engagement due to literacy and time constraints (Mncube, 2020). In Rwanda, the government-led parent forums have successfully boosted primary enrolment but face criticism for being overly top-down in their approach with common continental challenges including poverty limiting participation and persistent gender disparities in decision-making roles (Abbott, Mugisha and Sapsford, 2022).

While in Uganda, the UPE policy emphasized parental participation through School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations, but there have been policy implementation challenges across the country (MoES Uganda, 2022). There are also persistent issues affecting parental participation which include gender gaps, with women holding only 25% of SMC leadership positions (UBOS, 2023), and elite capture of decision-making processes by more affluent parents. Such differences negatively impacts the active and effective participation of partners in the planning and delivery of education.

2.3.1.1.2 Parents-Teachers' Associations (PTA) and School Management Committees

The World Bank (2018) states that SMCs have become instrumental in education decentralization reforms. The SMC bodies comprise of parents, teachers, and community representatives tasked with overseeing school operations, budgeting, and performance monitoring. In high-performing systems like Finland and Canada, SMCs operate with significant autonomy, influencing curriculum developing and adaptation as well as and resource allocation (OECD, 2019).

On the other hand, Epstein (2018) states that the concept of Parents-Teachers' Associations (PTAs) has changed significantly in global education services. The relationship between school, family and community partnerships demonstrate how effective PTAs contribute to improved learner achievement through enhanced parental involvement. In developed education systems like those of United States, England, Finland and Singapore, PTAs function as robust governance structures with powers to influence school policy, curriculum development, and resource allocation (OECD, 2019). However, Lareau (2011) argues that the benefits of PTA participation are unevenly distributed. He discusses that the middle-class parents leverage on the cultural capital to secure benefits for their children and thus worsening education inequalities. The World Bank's (2022) comparative study of 50 education systems revealed that schools with

institutionalized PTA frameworks showed 15-20% better learning outcomes but cautioned against viewing PTAs as a remedy for universal education challenges.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, although PTAs exist in all schools, they operate within a complex socio-economic and political landscape. Oketch et al.'s (2020) longitudinal study on Kenya's primary schools found that PTAs contributed 40% of infrastructural development in rural areas, decision-making power remained among economically advantaged male members excluding a section of females. Similarly in South Africa's experiences with legally mandated School Governing Bodies which incorporates PTA functions demonstrate both the potential and limitation of formalized parental participation. A troubling trend across the African continent as documented by UNESCO (2023), indicates that there is a glaring elite capture where PTA leadership is monopolized by local power brokers who sometimes divert resources to serve personal or political interests rather than educational needs.

Uganda's implementation of PTAs under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) framework presents a compelling case study of participatory education governance in low-resource settings. The Ministry of Education and Sports' (2022) national audit revealed disparities in PTA functionality; While the urban schools in Kampala work through PTAs to mobilize and raise resources for school investment, the rural PTAs in districts like Kotido lack the capacity and will to do the same. There are several Gender dynamics significantly that shape participation patterns. The UBOS (2023) report shows that women hold only 22% of PTA executive positions nationwide, dropping to 15% in Northern Uganda. The school governing bodies are constrained by inadequate training, received less formal orientation, political and foundational body interference and misalignment between school term schedules and seasonal agricultural cycles, and cultural norms that privilege male voices in public decision-making forums.

2.3.1.2 Community Participation (Political Arrangement)

The concept of community participation in governance has been increasingly institutionalized since the 1990s with the World Bank (2004) framing it as a necessary condition for sustainable development. Citizens participate in civic and political processes such as elections, planning and budgeting, referendums. Although it seems to be a given, Cornwall (2016) argue that participation has remained on paper with countries facing hurdles to implement policy provisions on participation. Hickey and Mohan (2005) contends that political participation cannot be

transformative without confronting existing power relations, showing how Uganda's decentralization program failed to redistribute authority to Local Governments despite creating local councils.

Studies in Africa, found that community participation often becomes a technical exercise in legitimization. Participatory processes in South Africa reinforced ethnic divisions rather than overcoming them (Mohan and Stokke, 2000). Analysts warn that political participation can become instruments of patronage. Recent feminist critiques, like Cornwall (2016) highlights how participatory spaces have excluded females. She brings out the case of Malawi where women's inclusion in health committees didn't translate to decision-making power due to marginalization.

The global push for participatory governance often represents anti-government sentiments leading to enactment of laws that bar citizens from having spaces for political participation. Governments have arrested and persecuted citizens organizing as reported by Miraftab (2004).

In Uganda for example, the Public Order Management Act (2013) was enacted to regulate public meetings and ensure public order. Due to its deficiencies, this law was annulled in 2020 by the Constitutional Court of Uganda. Despite its annulment, participation in policy processes by citizens is still not a given. Peaceful demonstrations have always been forcefully dispersed despite the law allowing for them.

2.3.1.2.1 Legal Frameworks for Citizens' Participation in Services

The participation of citizens in the service delivery processes is pivotal for the enhancement of governance and the quality of public services. Legal frameworks are crucial in this regard as they lay the foundational basis for participatory governance, enabling citizens to contribute to decision-making processes that affect their lives directly.

2.3.1.2.1.1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1984

The legal right to participate is well-grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several international human rights instruments ratified by Uganda. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world through the 30 articles detailing various rights and freedoms of humans. The UDHR was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, in response to the atrocities of World War II.

The declaration established a ground-breaking global standard for human rights by affirming the inherent dignity and equal rights of all people through its thirty articles that collectively outline fundamental civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The implementation of such declarations continues to face multiple challenges due to its non-binding nature, cultural relativism debates, and varying national interpretations of its principles (United Nations, 1948). However, the declaration has not exclusively protected all nations because, superpower countries have waged wars on smaller countries and have gone unpunished showing double standards promoting human rights.

At Africa regional level, article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) states that Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the governance of his/her country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law. It further states that every citizen shall have the right of equal access to the public service of his country. Thirdly, the African Charter states that every individual shall have the right of access to public property and services in strict equality of all persons before the law. Uganda is mandated to take all appropriate measures to domesticate and implement the above provisions.

2.3.1.2.1.2 United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a comprehensive plan aimed at achieving global sustainable development. This agenda is structured around critical dimensions including People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships. It emphasizes ending poverty and hunger, protecting the planet from degradation, ensuring prosperous and fulfilling lives, fostering peaceful and inclusive societies, and mobilizing the means required for implementation through global partnerships.

Essential to the agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The agenda underlines the importance of national ownership, urging countries to develop their own sustainable development policies, plans, and programs. It also highlights the necessity of international cooperation and a robust follow-up and review frameworks to ensure accountability and progress towards these goals. Uganda is committed to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth as highlighted under the 17 Sustainable Development Goals globally and in response, Uganda has since developed four National Development Plans though there are challenges to

their implementation. The ultimate goals of the National Development Plans were initially to steer Uganda to attain a middle-income status 2020 and strengthening the country's competitiveness for sustainable wealth creation, employment and inclusive growth (NPA – Uganda, 2020). Achieving these goals ultimately depends on citizen participation in the service delivery process to ensure that the different needs and interests of men, women, youth, children, persons with special needs, ethnic minorities, older persons, the rural poor, marginalised groups and disadvantaged regions and or locations are factored into all Local Government Commitments.

2.3.1.2.1.3 The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), adopted by the African Union (AU) on 30 January 2007 and entered into force in 2012, represents the continent's most comprehensive legal framework for promoting democratic consolidation, with Article 2 clearly directing state parties to promote and adhere to the universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights (African Union, 2007).

The Charter aimed to promote democratic principles, human rights, and good governance across Africa. It emphasized the importance of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, sought to prevent unconstitutional changes of government, and to promote the establishment of independent and impartial electoral bodies to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections. The charter also calls for member states to implement its provisions and report on their progress, encouraging cooperation between the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, and the international community to support democratic governance.

It is important to note that Uganda's failure to ratify the Charter despite signing in 2008 reflects what the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU) (2017) terms as democratic disguise syndrome among some AU members, where verbal support for democracy coexists with resistance to binding accountability mechanisms. This is evidenced by Uganda's constitutional amendments removing presidential age limits.

Civil society organizations like the Uganda Youth Network (UYONET) have intensified the ratification campaign since 2020 but all in vain. Through their policy briefs, UYONET argues that full adoption would institutionalize youth political participation quotas under Article 28 (1)

and strengthen electoral dispute resolutions, but the government of Uganda remains adamant to the youth's call to action (UYONET, 2020).

2.3.1.2.1.4 East African Community Protocol on Good Governance 2018

The East African Community Protocol on Good Governance requires partner States promote citizen participation in governance and development processes and specifically mandates public participation in policy formulation and implementation (EAC Secretariat, 2018). The protocol emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, and participatory democracy. It seeks to strengthen institutions of governance, promote the rule of law, and ensure regular, free, and fair elections conducted by independent and impartial electoral bodies. The protocol further highlights the need for mutual trust, peaceful coexistence, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. It recognizes the importance of private sector development in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty and inequality.

2.3.1.2.1.5 The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda

The Constitution of Uganda, adopted in 1995, establishes the fundamental legal framework for citizen participation in governance processes. It emphasizes democratic principles that empower and encourage active participation of all citizens at various levels of governance. The Constitution mandates that all citizens have access to leadership positions and be involved in decision-making processes (Article 38), ensuring a just, free, and democratic society. Subsidiary legislation, such as the Local Government Act of 1997, further reinforces these principles of good governance and citizens participation. The Local Government Act, particularly after its amendment in 2019, underscores the importance of involving citizens in the development and implementation of policies and services at the local government level. This includes consulting with citizens during the budget planning stages, involving them in oversight activities, and evaluating the effectiveness of public services. These reforms aim to enhance transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in public service delivery, ensuring that the needs and preferences of the community are adequately addressed.

2.3.1.2.1.6 The Local Governments Act (LGA)

The principal legislation governing decentralization in Uganda is the Local Government Act (LGA), which addresses various operational issues and defines mechanisms and procedures to promote service delivery and citizen participation. The LGA ensures both political and

democratic participation, allowing citizens to have control over decision-making processes. It underscores the importance of community participation, service delivery, and affirmative action for marginalized groups. Research by Akumu (2021) highlights that legal mandates for public hearings and consultations have significantly improved community involvement in the planning stages of urban development projects. This involvement has led to more inclusive and responsive urban planning, reflecting the needs and preferences of the community.

Conversely, Otim (2022) identifies gaps in the legal frameworks that limit effective participation. His study points out the lack of clear mechanisms for citizens to hold service providers accountable beyond the consultation phase. This gap suggests that while initial engagement is facilitated, ongoing accountability and feedback mechanisms need strengthening to ensure sustained and effective citizen participation.

2.3.1.2.1.7 The Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act, 2008

The Education Act (2008) states that provision of education and training to the child shall be a joint responsibility of the State, the parent or guardian and other stakeholders. This emphasises citizens' participation in education service delivery. Section 28 provides for the establishment of Boards of Governors (BoGs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) for the purposes of oversight in respect of the running of secondary and primary schools respectively.

Akumu (2021) states that while legal frameworks in Uganda nominally support citizen participation, practical challenges remain in their implementation. These include limited public awareness of legal rights to participation, bureaucratic apathy, and insufficient mechanisms for enforcement and accountability. Moreover, cultural and socio-economic factors sometimes inhibit the active involvement of certain groups, diminishing the inclusiveness of participatory processes (Okello and Kikooma, 2020).

To enhance the effectiveness of legal frameworks for citizens' participation, several strategies can be pursued. These include the revision of existing laws to incorporate more explicit provisions for citizen engagement, the development of regulations that operationalize participation in all phases of service delivery, and the strengthening of institutional capacities to enforce these legal mandates (World Bank, 2009). Gaventa (2004) adds that efforts should be made to increase public awareness and understanding of legal rights to participation, ensuring

that all citizens, irrespective of their socio-economic status, can effectively engage in governance processes.

The legal frameworks governing citizens' participation in service delivery processes play a crucial role in shaping the quality and effectiveness of public services (The Local Government Act, 1997). While existing legislation provides a basis for participatory governance, there is a need for ongoing legal reforms and capacity-building efforts to address the implementation gaps and barriers to effective citizen engagement (Akumu, 2021).

2.3.1.2.2 The Participation of Women and Youth in Service Delivery Processes

Globally, the inclusion of women and youth in service delivery processes is recognized as a critical factor for sustainable development, democratic governance and equitable service delivery. This is enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender and Equality) which emphasises the need for inclusive participation in decision making processes (United Nations, 2015).

The participation of women and youth in governance and decision-making processes is not just a matter of gender equality but a crucial component of effective governance. Research has consistently shown that when women and youth are involved in decision-making processes, the outcomes often reflect more equitable and community-focused decisions (World Bank, 2019).

For instance, in Scandinavian Countries, high levels of women's political participation have led to better social services, including healthcare and education (OECD, 2019). Similarly, youth participation in Latin America's participatory budgeting processes has improved infrastructure projects in marginalized areas (Baiocchi et al., 2014). On the African continent, women and youth constitute much of the population yet their involvement in service delivery remains limited due to cultural, economic and institutional barriers (African Union, 2015).

Ochen, Aloyo, Auma and Otim (2021) in their study on the role of women in urban governance in Uganda highlights that women leaders often prioritize social issues, including health, education, and child protection, which are critical for the well-being of urban populations. Similarly, a research project conducted in Lira City East Division revealed that women's groups have been instrumental in advocating for improved healthcare services and educational facilities

(Auma, 2023). These instances underscore the potential impact of women's active participation in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of service delivery.

The active involvement of youth in civic engagement and decision-making processes is essential in fostering effective service delivery and promoting sustainable urban development. With a significant portion of Uganda's population under the age of 30, integrating youth perspectives and energies into governance processes is not just beneficial but essential for holistic urban development.

According to UNDP (2022), youth participation is grounded in the recognition that young people have distinct insights and capabilities that can enhance public service delivery. Theoretical perspectives on participatory governance suggest that inclusive participation, encompassing diverse age groups, leads to more responsive, transparent, and accountable governance structures.

2.3.2 The Benefits of Citizens' Participation in Service Delivery Processes

Citizens' participation in service delivery processes brings numerous benefits that enhance the overall effectiveness and quality of public services. By involving individuals and communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, governments can tap into valuable local knowledge and ideas, foster public support for decisions, and build a spirit of cooperation and trust. This inclusive approach not only helps to avoid conflicts and costly delays but also ensures that services are more responsive to the actual needs of the community, leading to better outcomes for all.

2.3.2.1 Participatory Planning, Budgeting, and Decision-making Processes

Many agencies or individuals choose to exclude or minimize public participation in planning efforts claiming citizen participation is too expensive and time consuming. Yet, many citizen participation programs are initiated in response to public reaction to a proposed project or action. However, there are tangible benefits that can be derived from an effective citizen involvement in service delivery processes. Cogan et al. (1986) outline some benefits of citizen participation to the planning process as information and ideas on public issues, public support for planning decisions, avoidance of protracted conflicts and costly delays which will carry over to future decisions and spirit of cooperation and trust between the agency and the public.

2.3.2.2 Enhanced Transparency and Reduced Corruption

Citizens' participation in service delivery processes enhances transparency in public service delivery. Participatory planning and citizen monitoring platforms have led to reduced corruption by increasing accountability and preventing mismanagement of public funds. For instance, in Uganda, the implementation of participatory budgeting and social audits in the education sector led to a 30% decline in embezzlement cases by making expenditures publicly traceable (World Bank, 2020), while similar reforms in Tanzania's health sector—where citizens were trained to track allocations resulted in 65% improvements in funds utilization (UNDP, 2020). These findings align with global evidence from the OECD (2019), which underscores that transparency mechanisms, such as mandatory disclosure laws and citizen oversight committees, disrupt corrupt networks by shifting power dynamics toward grassroots stakeholders.

2.3.2.3 Improved Service Delivery and Development Outcomes

The World Bank (2018) states that effective service delivery is complicatedly linked to the extent and quality of citizen participation. Empirical evidence supports the premise that engaging citizens in the governance process leads to more responsive, efficient, and inclusive service provision. Improved service delivery and development outcomes are strongly linked to participatory governance models that empower citizens to engage in decision-making processes. Research demonstrates that when communities actively monitor public services as through participatory tools such as score cards, school performance significantly improves.

Recent studies underscore the positive correlation between citizen participation and service delivery effectiveness in democratic countries. For instance, in their study, Baiocchi et al., (2014) highlight that community-based monitoring initiatives have improved the overall quality of social services by ensuring that citizens' feedback is incorporated into service delivery adjustments. Encouraging participation planning is a key strategy to promote citizens active participation and that Citizen's participation in participatory budgeting has an impact on the allocation of resources for public utilities, leading to more efficient and community-oriented service provision.

2.3.2.4 Strengthen Democratic Governance and Social Cohesion

Citizen participation in governance processes strengthens democratic processes and fosters social cohesion by creating inclusive decision-making channels that bridge societal divides, as evidenced by Colombia's participatory budgeting program which reduced intergroup violence by 32% while increasing trust in local government by 41% (World Bank, 2022). This phenomenon aligns with social capital theory, which suggests that collaborative civic engagement builds the interpersonal networks and shared norms necessary service delivery processes between the citizens and service providers.

The essence of democratic governance is deeply rooted in the participation of citizens in the processes that shape their communities and lives. Citizens' participation manifests in various forms, including public consultations, community meetings, participatory budgeting, and feedback mechanisms. Recent legislation and policies in Uganda have increasingly emphasized the importance of such participation at all levels of service delivery sectors. The Local Government Act (1997), amended in 2019, for instance, mandates local governments to facilitate the involvement of citizens in planning and decision-making processes. While the Education Act (2008) requires citizens to participate in school governance processes.

2.3.2.5 Empower Marginalized Groups

Participatory governance models have been shown to significantly empower marginalized groups by creating institutionalized platforms for their voices to influence decision-making processes, as demonstrated by Uganda's Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative which increased women's participation in local council meetings by 40% and improved budget allocations for maternal health services by 25% (UNDP, 2022). This aligns with Gaventa's (2004) theory of participatory spaces which argues that inclusive policy processes can transform power relations for historically excluded populations, though as Hickey et al. (2005) caution, such empowerment requires sustained political commitment beyond token representation to address structural inequalities in resource distribution and social norms.

2.3.2.6 Promote Sustainable Development

Citizen participation promotes sustainable development by ensuring that policies and programs align with local needs while fostering environmental stewardship, as demonstrated by Nepal's

community forestry program where participatory management increased forest cover by 30% and household incomes by 22% over 15 years (UNDP, 2020). This aligns with the principle that sustainability requires meeting present needs without compromising future generations - a balance best achieved through inclusive decision-making that values both expert knowledge and indigenous wisdom. Participatory governance models promote sustainable development by integrating local knowledge with scientific expertise to create environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially equitable solutions. However, as Agrawal (2001) cautions, such participatory approaches must move beyond consultation to genuine power-sharing to avoid the local trap where communities bear responsibility without adequate resources or decision-making authority.

2.4 Factors Responsible for Limited Citizens' Participation in Service Delivery Processes

Limited citizens' participation in service delivery processes can be attributed to several factors as discussed below:

2.4.1 Gender Disparities

Gender disparities present a critical challenge, with girls in Northern Uganda experiencing higher dropout rates due to socioeconomic factors including early marriage, illiteracy, poverty, and unemployment, among others (UNICEF, 2022). Such barriers not only hinder women's participation but also impede the overall goal of achieving effective and inclusive service delivery. These multifaceted challenges highlight the need for targeted interventions to improve both the magnitude and quality of citizens participation in Northern Uganda where women and youth face numerous barriers to active participation.

2.4.2 Limited Awareness and Understanding of Participation Mechanisms

Despite these positive outcomes, several barriers hinder the full realization of effective citizens' participation. These challenges include limited awareness and understanding of participation mechanisms among citizens, socio-economic inequalities that affect participation levels, and sometimes, a lack of political will or bureaucratic inertia. Moreover, cultural norms and perceptions can also play a role in limiting the participation of certain groups, such as women and youth, in governance processes (Moore et al., 2002). It should be noted that there are four

conditions towards successful citizens participation; tolerance of collective action by the poor; credibility where the poor feel that the persons in question can be relied upon; stability over time and the extent to which the benefits are recognized as legal or moral entitlements.

2.4.3 Delayed Salaries and Inadequate Teacher Training

The quality of education is compromised by multiple systemic challenges. Teacher motivation and performance are significantly affected by delayed salaries and inadequate training opportunities (Kwaga, et al., 2019), leading to high absenteeism rates that negatively impact learning outcomes. This is evidenced by the alarming finding that 68% of Primary 3-5 pupils in Northern Uganda cannot read a basic sentence (UNICEF, 2022). The situation is particularly acute in East Division, where structural inequalities result in poorer school facilities compared to more central locations (Lwasa et al., 2021).

2.4.4 Weak School Governance Structures

Weak governance structures, characterized by limited institutional capacity, corruption, elite capture, failure to implement policies and limited accountability (World Bank, 2018). Such weaknesses manifest through dysfunctional schools' governance structures, limited oversight, inefficient bureaucracy. In Uganda, the unfunded governance structures do not fully exercise their mandate of oversight resulting in poor and management of school resources. Weak governance structures in schools across Uganda significantly impact the quality of education and service delivery. These structures are often characterized by institutional incapacity, corruption, and limited accountability, leading to poor management and oversight.

A study conducted by UBOS (2023) revealed that 35% of the primary schools in Uganda lacked functional school management committees. This is exemplified by the challenges of weak school governance structures in Uganda, where systemic issues including poor financial oversight, weak community participation undermine quality education. It further stated that PTA funds were not satisfactorily unaccounted for due to inadequate monitoring and auditing systems. The study further found that the inability of governance structures to exercise their oversight roles have resulted in teacher absenteeism up to 25%.

2.4.5 Inadequate Infrastructure in Schools

Infrastructure deficiencies further exacerbate the quality challenges, with 30% of schools lacking libraries and 60% operating without electricity (UBOS, 2021). These resource gaps are more pronounced in peri-urban locations, creating significant disparities in educational access and quality. Parental involvement, a crucial factor in educational outcomes, remains low due to high poverty levels and illiteracy rates among caregivers (Oyoo et al., 2012) contributing to 15% dropout rate in Northern Uganda.

2.5 Strategies to Enhance Citizens' Participation in Service Delivery Processes

Enhancing citizens' participation in service delivery processes is essential for creating more effective, transparent, and accountable public services. By actively involving individuals and communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of services, governments can ensure that these services better meet the needs and preferences of the people they serve. Implementing various strategies to boost citizen engagement can lead to improved service delivery outcomes and a more inclusive and responsive governance system.

2.5.1 Empower Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Including Women, Youth and Persons with Special Needs for Inclusive Participation

Mwesigwa (2024) suggests that there should be capacity building strategies that empower women and young people and integrate their perspectives into governance frameworks. These include strengthening the capacity of women and youth, promoting civic education and leadership training for school governance structures, and creating mechanisms for meaningful youth engagement in policy development and decision-making processes. Encouraging the use of digital platforms for civic engagement can also tap into the technological shrewdness of the younger generation and thus broadening their participation avenues.

2.5.2 Sensitization and Awareness Creation on Participatory Processes

The World Bank (2022) asserts that there is need for continuous sensitisation of the population on their participation rights in the delivery of services at local government levels. Citizens need to be empowered by Local Governments and development partners with skills to petition their leaders where programmes are not met and leaders appear not to take on board their demands.

The community must have the capacity to write their own petitions, which cannot occur if they are not empowered to do so. Many citizens do not know what roles and responsibilities they can play, as attested by members of the social accountability mechanisms engaged by this study. People are generally not aware of existing participatory platforms at school and community level; even where they are aware, they are unable to guarantee their full operationalization. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that opinions will be sufficiently considered by school administrators. As such, responsiveness to local citizens' demands is not guaranteed.

2.5.3 Enhance Citizens Civic Competence in Participatory Governance

Nabire (2021) recommends that governments should enhance the civic competence of citizens through creating awareness and capacity among citizens for active engagement, streamlining bureaucratic processes to facilitate easier citizen involvement, and implementing technology-based platforms for participatory feedback and monitoring as crucial steps. Furthermore, fostering a culture of transparency and accountability within local governance is essential for building trust and facilitating meaningful participation. Similarly, Nakato (2023) asserts that enhancing civic education to improve public understanding of participation rights and mechanisms, creating more inclusive and accessible participation platforms, and strengthening accountability and feedback loops to ensure that citizens' inputs are genuinely considered and acted upon. Furthermore, the integration of digital tools and platforms can also facilitate wider and more effective participation, particularly among the youth.

2.5.4 Design Capacity-building Programs for School Governance Structures

Amuge (2019) observes that capacity building is a critical enabler of effective citizen participation in service delivery processes starting from planning, budget analysis, implementation and advocacy for pro-citizens service delivery. She further asserts that capacity building on budget literacy, financial tracking, and advocacy skills, citizens were able to monitor 65% of health sector funds, reducing leakages and improving resource allocation. Members of SMCs and PTAs need to receive induction training on their core functions to better understand their roles and responsibilities when assuming office. This should be supplemented by refresher trainings for longer-standing incumbents (MoES Uganda, 2022).

2.5.5 Address Structural and Systematic Barriers to Citizens Participation

Effective service delivery is complicatedly linked to the extent and quality of citizen participation. Empirical evidence supports the premise that engaging citizens in the governance process leads to more responsive, efficient, and inclusive service provision (Mugisha, 2023). Addressing the barriers to effective participation and implementing targeted strategies to foster engagement are critical for realizing the full benefits of participatory governance. Ultimately, the collaborative efforts of citizens, government, and other stakeholders are essential for advancing sustainable urban development. Encouraging participation planning is a key strategy to promote citizens active participation. The Citizens participation in participatory budgeting has an impact on the allocation of resources for public utilities, leading to more efficient and community-oriented service provision (Aloyo, 2022).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed existing literature on citizen participation in education service delivery globally. Despite the existence of legal frameworks to promote participatory governance at Global, Africa and Nationals levels, effective active participation in governance and service delivery processes has not fully been realized; this is because critical gaps still exist in implementation of legal and policy frameworks, there are structural inequalities, disconnect, weak accountability mechanisms, elite capture and marginalization of vulnerable groups, inequalities in the distribution of services. While the UPE programme has improved learners' enrolment in Uganda, schools continue to struggle with overcrowding in classrooms, poor pupils' performance, inadequate infrastructures, limited citizen participation and systemic inequalities which negatively impacts on learning outcomes.

The highlighted gaps should be addressed through capacity building for local governance structures, promote gender responsive governance, institute stronger feedback mechanisms, conduct more civic education and leverage technology to bridge participation divides in underserved regions like Northern Uganda. Finally, transforming participation requires not just legal frameworks but genuine redistribution of power to align service delivery with the needs of all citizens.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was used by the researcher to collect data on the factors affecting citizens participation in service delivery processes in Lira City East Division. The chapter illustrates the Survey design, Area of Study, Population of Study, Sample size, Sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, quality control methods, data processing and management, data analysis, Limitations of the study, Solutions to Limitations and ethical issues.

3.1 Study Design

The study employed a descriptive design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess the Factors affecting Citizens' participation in education service delivery processes in Lira City East Division. The mixed method was appropriate because it was descriptive, time saving, and it enabled me to collect data from many respondents in the East Division. The data collected in qualitative form were in terms of views and feelings derived from experience of the respondents in terms of statements and not numbers. However, the quantitative paradigm was also employed in terms of quantities and measurements of data during analysis and presentation, as well as the form of diagrammatical presentation. All this enabled the researcher to describe the manifestations of lack of women's socio-economic empowerment, its magnitude, and the causes and effects thereof.

3.2 Area of Study

Lira City is located in Northern Uganda approximately 340 kilometers north of Kampala City the Capita of Uganda. Lira City is bordered by the districts of Otuke to the north, Alebtong to the northeast, Dokolo to the east, Apac to the southwest, Kole to the west and Pader to the northwest. Lira City East Division is one of the two Divisions in Lira City. This study area was selected because it allows the researcher to understand the specific challenges of citizen participation in a post-conflict, rapidly urbanizing setting, which is distinct from more stable or historically developed regions of Uganda.

3.3 Population of Study

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2024) report, Lira City East Division has a population of 123,669 people (63,347 females and 60,322 males). These people belong to many different tribes: Langi, Acholi, Iteso, Lugbara, Baganda, Basoga and Gishu, among others. The economic activities engaged in are: shop keeping, clothes and foods vending, hardware businesses, services and hawking, among others. This study targeted 74 respondents from five schools in Lira City East Division.

3.4 Sampling Procedures

3.4.1 Sample Size

A total of 74 respondents (43 female and 31 male) were used for this study. These included 08 Bankers, 03 Head teachers, 02 Deputy Head teachers, 01 Parish Chief, 01 Lira East Division Chairperson, 01 City Education Officer, 01 Assistant Town Clerk, 01 Community Development Officer, 20 Pupils, 03 Students, 01, Local Council one Chairperson, 01 Deputy Mayor, 06 Casual workers, 17 Peasant farmers and 06 private business owners.

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

The sample of 74 respondents was determined through a purposive sampling approach which is common in qualitative and mixed research methods. A smaller but information rich sample was selected to provide in-depth insights into the subject matter. Key informants with headteachers, Lira City leaders were chosen purposively for their expertise, while focus group participants on the communities were selected to represent diverse community voices. Therefore, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques was employed to identify the parishes, villages and to identify respondents. First of all, systematic random sampling was used to identify schools to participate by generating list of schools in the division of study. Then the head teachers and their deputies were selected purposively given that they occupy unique positions in the school environment and they are alone. The same happened to the local and political leaders. The pupils and students were selected randomly in their particular classes. The same happened to the peasant farmers and the private business-owners.

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

3.5.1 Methods

The study employed observation, survey, interview and documentary analysis as methods of data-collection.

3.5.2 Instruments

Observation Checklist

The researcher used an observation checklist with structured questions to rate, record numbers and conditions of infrastructure in schools under study. The tool was used to record information on classroom blocks, toilet facilities, water sources in schools, libraries and playgrounds.

Interview Guide

According to Etyang (2018) interviews are data collection methods which involve face-to-face and verbal exchange where the researcher asks questions to one or more interviewees. During this study, questions were carefully designed to provide adequate coverage for the purpose of the research. Semi structured interview questions were used by the researcher to get information from pupils, parents and respondents who had expert knowledge on education service delivery in Lira City East Division. Interviews provided suitable responses based on knowledge and experience of respondents in real time and responses could be probed for clarity. The interviews enabled the researcher to understand the respondents' perceptions, feelings and emotions. Key informant interviews and focus group discussion guides were developed and tailored to different categories of respondents.

These were administered with selected respondents who had specific knowledge of local governance, citizen's participation and service delivery processes.

Questionnaire

Kothari (2004) argues that a questionnaire is advantageous because it is free from bias of the interviewer since answers are in the respondent's own words and large samples can be used and thus the results can be more valid and reliable. Here the researcher distributed self-administered

questions for selected respondents to answer in writing at their own convenience and to substantiate their opinions. The questionnaire which contained standardized questions designed in Kobo toolbox and was sent to literate respondents for self-administration. For this study, questionnaires as an instrument for data collection was used on all literate respondents mainly due to their ability to read, understand questions but also given that they had limited time. The questions used were mainly open ended.

Document Analysis

The researcher analysed documents in each school. The documents reviewed included academic records, pupils' enrolment, teachers' attendance books, human resource management documents, minutes of annual general meetings, visitors' books and teacher daily attendance records. Document analysis provided facts, evidence and validated information gathered from questionnaires, interviews and observation.

3.6 Quality Control Methods

All study instruments were designed with ease, typed and pre-tested before deployment to establish validity and reliability. The pretesting helped to identify and clarify uncertainties, wording which permitted detection of omission and early corrections. The researcher conducted pretesting at Erute Primary School and the communities surrounding. The school was chosen because it had learners from the urban and peri-urban setting of Erute primary school community. The researcher ensured that all respondents could clearly understand the questions and provide additional information whenever requested.

3.7 Data Processing and Management

Data recorded during interviews were transcribed at the end of each field day in order to have all the data in a standard format. The transcriptions were compared with the original source in order to keep transcription errors to a minimum. The data bases were created and edited and data files created, then the data were organized and summarized. The processing was done manually. For the survey data, a data summary sheet was created whereby a series of columns were created, one for numbering the respondents, one for each question asked, and one for each demographic item. But in order for this to be possible, the elements had first to be coded by assigning them

representative numerals. The data were frequently stored on the computer hard disc, storage disc printed out as hard copy, with a back-up copy on another disk.

3.8 Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

The researcher organized the collected data according to the themes of the study, edited, coded and classified. The data were also sorted and arranged according to the number of times that similar responses had occurred (frequencies) and percentages calculated, which formed the basis for correlation analysis that was used to establish the essential variables like the socio-economic empowerment of women and functional skilling, hence forming the basis for data interpretation, discussion, conclusions and recommendations. The data were then summarized in tables, charts and graphs.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis as systematic and well-structured methods. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation. Specifically, the analysis was guided by a concurrent flow of activity of data reduction, display, generation of meaning and drawing conclusions right from the start and throughout the process of conducting the research. As such, the researcher identified words and phrases which were prominent to develop open codes, that is to say that the researcher read through the data several times and developed tentative labels for chunks of data that summarized the key emerging issues. Then concepts and categories were identified which formed the basic units in the data analysis. Through the process, a small group of major codes to form themes emerged. Sub-themes were also generated, all relating to the extent of citizens' participation in education services. In that way, all themes were developed basing on the concepts of the research objectives. The end-result of the thematic analysis highlighted the salient 'constellations' of meanings present in the text. Lastly, some explanations were added that included information from key informants such as the leaders. All the responses raised by the respondents during the interviews in response to the questions asked were noted down, key explanations were also cited and summarized in narratives, tables and figures by way of presentation.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

During the study period, the researcher followed the ethical process for conducting research. During this study, the Researcher Assistants were asked to exhibit the highest level of integrity and standards among which include the following.

- a. Respect for participants who participated in the research and whose data was used in research by seeking their informed consent.
- b. Protect the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents who participated in the study.
- c. Provide participants with enough information to be able to adequately assess the risks and potential benefits associated with their participation in the research.
- d. Treat all participants with equal respect.
- e. Conduct this study after obtaining clearance and permission from the University.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

During the study, the researcher encountered the following limitations.

The process of arranging and conducting interviews and focus group discussions faced logistical challenges particularly at Cura Primary School, where limited accessibility and communication hindered data collection. As a result, both the quantity and quality of data were affected. Additionally, the study was confined to only one Division of the City, with a small sample size, further limiting the breadth of insights. These constraints impacted the strength of the findings and the validity of the conclusions which should therefore be generalized with caution.

The limitation of logistics was addressed by working closely with the local council (LC1) chairperson and a respected community mobilizer in the area to pre-inform and persuade potential respondents, which improved turnout and engagement. While the accessibility issues at Cura Primary School, was solved by making flexible schedule with multiple visits were scheduled to accommodate wider range of respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected from the field using various research instruments. The data are organized according to the main themes outlined in the objectives, which are further divided into sub-themes for clarity. Tables, frequencies, and percentages are used to present the data comprehensively. The analysis of this data leads to the findings discussed in this chapter.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents the personal data of respondents. The variables under the study include sex, age-range, level of education, occupation and marital status.

4.1.1 Sex

Sex was considered a crucial characteristic to explore any potential differences in participation based on sex. The results are summarized in the table below:

Table 4.1: Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	43	58
Male	31	42
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

According to the table 4.1, there were more female respondents (58%) than male respondents. The higher participation of females in this study is explained by several factors: firstly, the females are usually at home and are more involved when it comes to participating in school activities. Secondly, the government of Uganda, in collaboration with development partners, is implementing several policies which are empowering females and promoting gender transformative education and lastly Lira City female population accounts for 54% (UBOS

Census Report, 2024). These factors collectively contribute to the higher participation of females in education service delivery within the division.

4.1.2 Age – range

The study sought to establish the age-range of the respondents. This was in order to relate to the possibility of experience in understanding issues of livelihood. The results are summarized in the table below.

Table 4.2: Age-range

Age-range (years)	Frequency	Percentage
11 – 15	20	27
16 – 24	12	16
25 – 34	17	23
35 above	25	34
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 4.2 indicates that most respondents (57%) were above 24 years of age. This age group constituted selected teachers identified from schools under survey, students within school communities, youth respondents and members of the community involved in various occupations in Lira City East Division. This age group is well-positioned to understand the dynamics of participation and provide reliable information regarding education service delivery processes, as they either had children in the schools or were members of the school community. Learners constituted 27% of the total sample, highlighting the involvement of younger individuals in the study. This demographic distribution stresses the importance of engaging both adults and learners in discussions about education service delivery to ensure comprehensive insights and effective solutions.

4.1.3 Occupation

This study was about the participation of citizens in education service delivery which is a key factor in attaining quality education. It was, therefore, important to establish the occupations of the respondents. The results are summarized in the table below.

Table 4.3: Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Banker	8	11
Head teachers	3	4
Deputy Head teacher	2	2.7
Teacher	2	2.7
Parish Chief	1	1.4
Division Chairperson	1	1.4
City Education Officer	1	1.4
Assistant Town Clerk	1	1.4
CDO	1	1.4
Pupil	20	27
LC 1	1	1.4
Student	3	4
Deputy Mayor	1	1.4
Casual worker	6	8
Peasant farmer	17	23
Private business	6	8
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Based on the data presented in Table 4.3, 38% of respondents were employed in the formal sector while 31% were casual workers and peasants, and another 31% were students and pupils. This distribution highlights the diverse occupational landscape within Lira City East Division, with a significant portion involved in informal and non-formal sectors.

The 38% of respondents employed in the formal sector reflects a significant presence of formal jobs in Lira City East Division. This is partly due to the participation of teachers and parents residing in the peri-urban areas of the division but also the division being both urban and peri-urban, hosts a concentration of businesses, government offices, and educational institutions. It also accommodates a substantial number of people who commute to work in the urban area, leading to a higher proportion of the population engaged in formal employment.

4.1.4 Marital Status

The study wished to establish the marital status of the respondents. This was related to knowledge about issues of the nature of socio-economic development at the household level. The results are summarized in the table below:

Table 4.4: Marital Status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	40	54
Single	34	46
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Based on the survey data in Table 4.4, majority of respondents (54%) were married, while 46% respondents were single. The 46% unmarried respondents included pupils across the five schools under study, students pursuing education in higher institutions of learning, youthful respondents and some teachers who were single. The high number of single respondents can be attributed to the involvement of learners and students in the survey. This demographic information provides valuable context for understanding the perspectives and experiences of the respondents, particularly in relation to their marital status and its potential impact on their views regarding educational services and accessibility.

4.2 Objective One: The Magnitude and Quality of Education Service Delivery in Lira City East Division

This section presents findings on infrastructure, school accessibility, teacher quality and training as well as learners' enrolment and performance while in school. These are the elements which account for the extent and the quality of education service delivery.

4.2.1 The Status of Infrastructure

This section examines the state of learning infrastructure and basic amenities across the surveyed schools looking at classrooms, toilets, libraries and playgrounds relative to respective schools 2024 enrolment numbers. Findings are summarized in the table below.

Table 4.5: Status of Infrastructure across Five Schools

School	Classrooms	Library	Playground	Toilet
Cura P/S	16	00	02	05
Elia Olet P/S	14	01	02	07
Erute P/S	13	00	02	04
Ireda P/S	16	01	02	05
St. Paul P/S	15	00	02	04

Source: Field Data, 2024

Based on Table 4.5, the findings reveal that none of the schools meet Uganda's classroom standard of 1:55. The classroom shortages indicate a crisis in learning environments, especially at Cura and Elia Olet Primary Schools, where pupil-classroom ratios are 1:99 and 1:106, respectively, nearly double the recommended standard. With only 16 classrooms for 1,577 pupils at Cura P/S and 14 classrooms for 1,480 pupils at Elia Olet P/S, these schools face severe overcrowding, which diminishes teacher and learner attention and compromises learning outcomes and even dropouts. The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Classroom Ecology Models (Doyle, 2006) emphasize that overcrowding disrupts teacher-pupil interaction and reduces individualized attention. Erute P/S slightly exceeds the standard with a ratio of 1:62,

while Ireda P/S (38:1) and St. Paul P/S (50:1) show relatively better conditions. The data highlights an urgent need for over 13 additional classrooms between Cura and Elia Olet Primary Schools to meet national guidelines.

Latrine facilities across the five schools are critically inadequate, violating both the World Health Organization's standard (2018) of 1 toilet per 50 pupils and Uganda's standard of 1 toilet per 40 girls and 60 boys (Uganda's WASH in School Policy, 2017). Cura P/S has the worst ratio, with 1 toilet for 315 pupils, followed by Elia Olet P/S with 1 toilet for 211 pupils, and St. Paul P/S with 1 toilet for 186 pupils. Even the best-performing school, Ireda P/S, has 1 toilet for 122 pupils, which is more than twice the recommended capacity. These deficits pose severe health risks, particularly for girls, and may contribute to higher dropout rates.

Further findings reveal that libraries, which are essential for learning, are missing in three schools. Only Elia Olet and Ireda Primary Schools have libraries, leaving 3,124 pupils, or 62% of the total enrolment across the other three schools, without access to reading materials or study spaces. This disparity limits opportunities for literacy development and independent learning. Cura P/S, with the largest enrolment of 1,577 pupils, lacks a library entirely, exacerbating educational inequities and negatively impacting learning outcomes. Prioritizing the construction of libraries in these schools through partnerships with community contributions and Non-Governmental Organizations could significantly address this infrastructure gap and enhance learning outcomes. The Uganda's National Literacy Policy (2022) urges schools to have libraries, but findings show limited compliance which echoes World Bank (2020) reports on rural resource gaps.

While all schools reported having at least two playgrounds for both boys and girls, observational data and enrolment figures indicate severe constraints on the functionality of these playgrounds. For example, at Cura P/S, 1,577 pupils share two playgrounds, likely making them inadequate for extracurricular developmental benefits. This situation aligns with Hyndman's (2018) findings on overcrowded play spaces and highlights the need for quality benchmarks beyond the mere availability of playgrounds.

During discussions with learners at Cura Primary School, they confirmed the critical issues such as the lack of sufficient toilets, teaching staff, learning space and learning materials. This disparity in infrastructure and resources underscores the need for targeted interventions to

improve the learning environment and ensure equitable access to quality education across all schools. One learner had this to say:

"...our latrines are not enough, we are squeezed in the classrooms, and we also do not have safe drinking water source in school..."

The learners' voices underscore critical gaps in essential resources, which may significantly hinder their overall educational experience. These comments highlight the urgent need for improved facilities to adequately accommodate the learner population and ensure a safe and hygienic learning environment. Addressing these shortcomings is vital for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational setting where all students can thrive.

4.2.2 Barriers to School Accessibility

School accessibility is a critical aspect of education service delivery; the study focused on barriers which impede learners to access educational facilities and resources. In this section, the study examined the physical, infrastructure and location barriers that may hinder students' and parents' ability to fully participate in the educational process.

Table 4.6: Barriers to School Access

Barriers	Frequency	Percentage
Ramps	19	25.7
Bad roads	35	43.2
Long distance	25	31.1
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Survey findings in Table 4.6 show that majority of respondents (43.2%) indicated that infrastructural barriers including bad roads which are sometimes flooded hinder effective education service delivery. 31.1% of the respondents mentioned location barriers like long distance and unsafe routes that present a strong challenge to learning outcomes in the division while 25.7% attested to schools having physical barriers including lack of ramps to support

persons with disabilities, building structures, emergency exits among others. This indicates that while learners access school, there are accessibility concerns that the schools and the Lira City East Division needs to address for maximum education outcomes. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to access education services within the division.

The survey findings on infrastructure (43.2%), location (31.1%), and physical barriers (25.7%) in Lira City East Division align with existing literature documenting spatial inequalities in school facilities (Lwasa et al., 2021), rural-urban disparities in resource distribution (World Bank, 2020), and policy gaps in disability-inclusive infrastructure (Uganda's WASH Policy, 2017). These findings confirm persistent systemic challenges in education access highlighted by UNICEF (2022) and UBOS (2021) reports particularly regarding overcrowding, unsafe routes, and inadequate sanitation.

4.2.3 The Situation of Teachers

This section examines the staffing situation focusing on teacher-pupil ratio per school, teacher qualifications and teachers' availability across the five primary schools under study.

4.2.3.1 The Number of Teachers per School

The study looked at the number of teachers and teacher-pupil ratios per school which is an important factor that influences the quality of education and learners' outcomes. Findings are summarized in the table below.

Table 4.7: Distribution of Teachers per School and Teacher-pupils' Ratios

Sn	School	Standard required	Government teachers	PTA paid teachers	Ratio (2024)
01	Ireda P/S	27	24	02	1.23
02	Elia Olet P/S	25	23	02	1.59
03	Cura P/S	20	18	02	1.79
04	St. Paul P/S	17	17	00	1.44
05	Erute P/S	15	13	02	1.54

Source: Field data, 2024

The data presented in Table 4.7, reveal that schools in Lira City East Division have significant teacher shortages with only St. Paul P/S meeting the full government teacher quota of 1:53. Schools like Cura P/S and Elia Olet P/S face severe gaps, operating with 2-3 fewer teachers than required. There are high teacher-pupil ratios, particularly in Cura P/S (1:79) and Elia Olet P/S (1:59), far exceeding Uganda's standard of 1:53. These over-crowded conditions strain teachers and compromise the quality of education, as teachers struggle to provide individual attention to pupils in oversized classes.

The presence of PTA-paid teachers in four out of the five schools suggests a reliance on community support to fill gaps left by government allocations. This could indicate funding or resource allocation issues within the education system in Lira City East Division.

The reliance on PTA-paid teachers underscores the importance of community involvement in education service delivery processes. Such partnerships between schools and communities could be beneficial in addressing staffing challenges in not only Lira City East Division but across Lira City. Overall, the data suggests a need for strategic planning and policy adjustments to ensure that schools are adequately staffed to provide quality education.

Kwaga et al. (2019) affirm that teacher shortages, inadequate training and high pupil-teacher ratios greatly affect teacher motivation and performance in Ugandan schools. The reliance on PTA-paid teachers reflects Mugimu et al.(2013) who argue that Uganda's Universal Primary Education program often marginalizes community input, forcing parents to fill teacher and other resources gaps. These staffing challenges further validate UNICEF's (2022) findings about compromised learning outcomes in Northern Uganda, where 68% of Primary 3-5 pupils cannot read basic sentences due to systemic constraints in education service delivery.

4.2.3.2 Teacher Quality and Training

The quality and training of teachers are pivotal components in achieving quality education services. The research sought to establish whether the teachers were well-qualified and trained to be able deliver education in Lira City East Division. The results are summarized in the table below.

Table 4. 8: Teachers' Qualifications

School	Certificate	Diploma	Bachelors	Masters	Total Number of Teachers
Cura P/S	02	14	04	00	20
Elia Olet P/S	05	16	04	00	25
Erute P/S	04	08	02	01	15
Ireda P/S	06	14	07	00	27
St. Paul P/S	09	08	00	00	17
Total	26	60	17	01	104

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 4.8 indicate that 57.7% of teachers across the five schools possess Diploma qualifications, while 25% hold certificates, reflecting the foundational level of teacher training in the region. Additionally, 16.3% of teachers have Bachelor's degrees, and only one teacher, representing 0.96%, holds a Master's degree in one of the five schools.

The study findings indicate that all teachers in the schools meet the minimum qualification of a Certificate. Most teachers hold Diplomas, and there is a reasonable presence of bachelor's degree holders. This suggests that the teaching staff is relatively well-qualified, which could positively impact the quality of education in Lira City East Division. Higher qualifications often correlate with better teaching practices and improved student outcomes. Additionally, this indicates a strong commitment to professional development among the teachers.

The Education Act (2008), stresses that the minimum requirement for a primary school teacher is a certificate. The prevalence of Diploma-holders aligns with national patterns reported by the Ministry of Education and Sports and is correlated with improved teaching methodologies.

However, the good teacher qualification has not yielded positive pupil performance. Mugimu et al. (2013) argue that Uganda's Universal Primary System (UPE) has many times failed to leverage advanced training due to top-down implementation and resource constraints not only in

Lira City but across the country. Lwasa et al., (2021) emphasized that overcrowded classrooms reaching 1:80 teacher-pupil ratios accompanied by poor infrastructure diminishes the potential impact of qualified staff as is the case within the five schools under study. UNICEF (2022), in their study report state that 68% of primary 3-5 pupils in Lango cannot read basic sentences, suggesting a disconnect between teacher training and classroom outcomes.

This analysis suggests that teacher qualifications, while necessary, are insufficient alone to elevate education quality in Lira City East Division without parallel investments in working conditions, ongoing professional development, and holistic system strengthening. Okello et al. (2020) highlight that low parental engagement and socioeconomic barriers interact with teacher capacity, creating complex bottlenecks in education quality in Lira City East Division.

Across all schools, the existing systems for professional development and supervision were emphasized as crucial for enhancing teaching quality. Regular retooling courses and periodic assessments were particularly valued for helping teachers stay updated with new teaching methodologies and curriculum changes. However, during a Focus Group Discussion at St. Paul Primary School, one teacher stressed that more capacity building is still required to meet the changing needs in education.

“... professional development opportunities such as re-tooling courses and regular meetings to discuss areas of improvement significantly contribute to maintaining high teaching standards...”, the teacher said.

The finds above provide a clear picture of the educational qualifications of teachers in Lira City East Division, highlighting the current state of teacher training and the need for further professional development. The low percentage of teachers with advanced degrees (Bachelors and Masters) suggests a potential area for policy intervention, with recommendations including initiatives to encourage higher education among teachers. The findings can pave the way for future research. For example, studies could explore the impact of teacher qualifications on learners' performance.

4.2.3.2 Teachers' Availability

Teacher-availability is a crucial factor that influences the quality of education and learner support. This study aimed to assess not only the physical presence of teachers but also their

accessibility to students for academic assistance, mentorship, and involvement in extra-curricular activities. The study sought to gather perceptions from pupils and Head teacher school administrators and below is the presentation of the findings.

Table 4.9: Teachers’ Availability

Teacher availability	Frequency	Percentage
Always available	08	32
Most of the time available	13	52
Sometimes available	04	16
Rarely available	00	0
Never available	00	0
Total	25	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 4.9 indicates that 52% of respondents, including pupils and school administrators, reported that teachers are available most of the time, while 32% stated that teachers are always available, and 16% mentioned that teachers are sometimes available. This suggests that teacher availability is generally perceived positively by learners and school administrators across the five schools. The positive perception of teacher availability likely contributes to a supportive learning environment, enhancing student engagement and educational outcomes.

Four out of five Head teachers agreed that teachers are always committed and present not only in classrooms but also in school to provide after class support commitment and presence of teachers in the classroom. This is especially emphasized by head teachers in both urban and rural settings. One head teacher stated:

"...the way I see it, the teachers are patriotic and are always in class..."

This statement highlights a sense of dedication among teachers, indicating that they are consistently present and engaged in their teaching duties. Such patriotism and reliability

contribute positively to the learning environment, ensuring that learners receive continuous instruction. The World Bank (2020) notes that Ugandan teachers often show remarkable dedication despite challenging conditions, such as overcrowded classrooms and limited teaching resources. The availability of teachers and documented learning outcomes support Boven’s (2007) argument that service delivery assessment is multidimensional, with presence being just one aspect of effective teaching. According to UNESCO (2014), while teacher availability is a necessary foundation for performance, addressing broader systemic challenges ranging from resource allocation to citizen participation in all aspects of education service delivery is crucial for transformative improvements (Okello et al., 2020).

4.2.4 Learners’ Enrolment and Performance

This section presents findings on pupils’ enrolment numbers and their past performance in the five schools under study. Analysing these trends and patterns leads to understanding how enrolment rates impact educational outcomes and identify factors that contribute to variations in student achievement of three years.

4.2.4.1 Learners’ Enrolment

Understanding the enrolment trend is crucial for stakeholders as they strive to enhance quality of education in Lira City East Division. This section provides insights into the dynamics of student populations across the five schools for the past four years from 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Table 4.10: Learners’ Enrolment in the Five Schools for the Past Four Years

	School	2021	2022	2023	2024
01	Cura primary school	986	1,862	1,611	1,577
02	Elia Olet primary school	549	757	1,302	1,480
03	Erute primary school	374	616	620	802
04	Ireda primary school	413	625	644	612
05	St. Paul primary school	518	795	767	745

Source: Field data, 2024

Based on the data presented in Table 4.10, enrolment trends across the five schools reveal varying challenges and improvements. For example, in 2021 all schools in the division had low pupil enrolments which was explained by prolonged stay at home due to the Corona pandemic. In 2022, there was an increase in enrolment across all the five schools. Enrolment at Cura Primary School increased by 53% to 1,862 in 2022 but decreased to 1,611 in 2023, and further to 1,577 in 2024. This consistent decline may indicate issues such as declining school reputation, inadequate facilities, parents' dissatisfaction affecting the pupil's population. In 2021, Elia Olet Primary School enrolled 549 which significantly increased to 757 in 2022, 1,302 in 2023, and then to 1,480 in 2024, suggesting improvements in school reputation, facilities or preferred by parents who work within the city and pupils who commute.

Erute Primary School registered the lowest enrolment of 374 learners which steadily increased to 616 in 2022 to 620 in 2023, and then to 802 in 2024, indicating growth due to enhanced educational quality, better infrastructure, or effective community engagement. Similarly, Ireda Primary School also registered a low enrolment of 413 learners in 2021 which increased to 625 in 2022, 644 in 2023 and a decrease to 612 in 2024, suggesting instability in factors influencing enrolment, such as changes in school management, limited community participation, and competition from other schools. St. Paul Primary School registered 518 learners in 2021 which increased to 795 in 2022 and then decreased to 767 in 2023, and further to 745 in 2024, indicating challenges such as deteriorating school facilities, reduced academic performance, or shifting population dynamics in Lira City East Division.

Learners' enrolment in the five schools under study indicates a significant increase over the past years driven by the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy, which provides free schooling and encourages higher attendance. The enrolment trends across the five schools highlight varying challenges and improvements, with some schools experiencing growth due to enhanced facilities and reputation, while others face declines likely due to infrastructure issues, management changes, and population shifts.

The low enrolment rates in 2021 align with UNICEF's (2022) findings that socioeconomic factors, including early marriage and child labour, disrupted school attendance during health crises. The rebound in enrolment across all schools in Lira City East Division in 2022 reflects UBOS's (2021) documentation of a post-COVID net primary enrolment rate of 89% as systems

stabilized. Lwasa et al. (2021) confirmed that poor and inadequate infrastructure, such as the lack of libraries and limited power supply to schools, affects general education service delivery, not just enrolment. Cornwall (2007) warns that without community participation; sufficient learner cannot be achieved. She also asserts that parents or caregivers need to be empowered to meaningfully participate in education service delivery processes.

4.2.4.2 Learners Performance in PLE

During the study, it was deliberate to establish the performance of learners of the five schools under study for four years to establish performance trend. The findings are summarized in the table below.

Table 4.11: PLE Performance of the Five Schools over Four Years from 2020 – 2023

Sn.	School	2020 (Div. 1&2)	2021 (Div. 1&2)	2022 (Div. 1&2)	2023 (Div. 1&2)
01	Erute P/S	52/110 (48%)	60/115 (52%)	66/120 (55%)	70/120 (58%)
02	Cura P/S	45/105 (42%)	50/110 (45%)	55/110 (50%)	60/115 (53%)
03	Ireda P/S	38/100 (38%)	42/105 (40%)	47/110 (43%)	50/105 (47%)
04	Elia Olet P/S	35/100 (35%)	38/105 (37%)	40/105 (39%)	43/105 (41%)
05	St. Paul P/S	35/45 (78%)	40/50 (82%)	45/55 (85%)	50/55 (88%)

Source: Field Date, 2024

The data presented in Table 4.11, show that St. Paul Primary School performance in division one and two over four years stands at 86%, followed by Cura Primary School at 65 %, Erute Primary School at 59 %, Ireda Primary School at 48% and Elia Olet Primary School at 40%. The overall mean performance of pupils across all five schools in four years is 60% for division one and two.

Findings indicate that St. Paul Primary School consistently achieves the highest mean performance, while Elia Olet Primary School has the lowest. The other schools show varying levels of performance, with Erute and Cura primary schools performing above the overall mean, and Ireda Primary School slightly below.

The consistent high performance of St. Paul Primary School suggests that their teaching methods and resource allocation could serve as a model for other schools aiming to improve their academic outcomes. While the lower performance of Elia Olet Primary School highlights the need for targeted interventions, such as enhanced community participation, additional support for teachers and students, to address the underlying issues affecting their academic achievement. This performance gap between top and bottom performing schools throughout four years signals systematic inequities that demand policy attention by Lira City authorities.

A critical gap identified is that these schools still have between 40% – 50% of learners scoring Division three, four, or fail which is undesirable. Such learners struggle to transition to well-performing secondary schools or skills development institutes. Therefore, while there are positive trends in performance, targeted interventions are necessary to address the challenges faced by the lower-performing students to ensure equitable educational outcomes.

Findings on the quality of education services varied significantly across different schools, with urban head teachers generally reporting better conditions compared to their rural counterparts. However, challenges were prevalent in both settings. One Head teacher described the quality of services as follows:

"...much as certain things necessary for education are available, we still have many gaps like not all learners have school uniforms, parents do not adequately contribute to PTA funds and for some reasons, learners abscond classes without reasons..., Head teacher Ireda P/S"

At Elia Olet Primary School, many pupils' academic performance is significantly affected by their roles as house helps. These pupils often arrive late and leave early due to household chores, resulting in irregular class attendance. This inconsistent attendance pattern negatively impacts their academic progress. Additionally, the Head teacher observed that the guardians of these pupils seldom attend school meetings, further exacerbating the challenges these learners face.

"... in my school for example, many learners are maids who have been brought back to school by well-wishing parents who value education, but the learners' efforts are affected by work at home, these parents also do not attend meetings whenever called upon, how can such learners perform competitively..., she wondered? Head teacher Elia Olet P/S"

Despite high enrolment, completion rates remain low due to high dropout rates, particularly among female learners in upper classes (P5 – P7). Dropouts are primarily attributed to socioeconomic factors such as poverty, early marriages, and child labour. During discussions with learners, they highlighted long distances to school and community stereotypes, especially for girls in puberty, as significant challenges. The scolding by men and older boys often leads these girls to drop out, thereby reducing the completion rate despite high enrolment.

“... as girls we do not have the same freedom like boys to study with old age like 16 or 17, people will be laughing at you as you go to school, while others sayingwhy don't you get married, you are old enough? such statements have led to dropout in our school...”, a learner from Erute Primary School.

The Local Council Chairperson in Erute prison cell confirmed that girls often lose momentum in their studies, particularly when they reach primary five. He explained that the conditions in peri-urban schools are not conducive to straightforward academic progression. As a result, some learners repeat classes and enter puberty at an early age.

The performance disparities between St. Paul Primary School and the other four schools are supported by Mugimu et al. (2013), who explain that the UPE program fails to incorporate community members' input in planning, delivering, and monitoring education services. This performance gap also reflects the inequalities in urban and peri-urban management. Schools do not receive uniform resource allocation, yet they are expected to achieve the same results under the same policy framework (Lwasa et al., 2021).

Additionally, the high dropout rates among adolescent girls, as highlighted in the UNICEF report of 2022, underscores socioeconomic factors such as early marriages that disrupt education (UNICEF, 2022). The head teacher of Elia Olet Primary School reports that many of her pupils are working as house helps, reflecting findings that high poverty levels and illiteracy rates among caregivers create attendance barriers that even dedicated teachers cannot overcome alone (Okello et al., 2020).

4.3 Objective Two: The Current Level of Citizens' Participation in Education Service Delivery Processes in Lira City East Division

This section presents findings on how citizens participate, their levels of awareness on education services, knowledge on school management committees and their functionality, monitoring learning and their influence in school related activities.

4.3.1 Citizens Participation in Education Service Delivery processes

The study asked respondents how they participated in education service delivery processes in the schools where their children go and below is a summary of findings.

Table 4.12: How Citizens Participate in Education Service Delivery Processes

How citizens participate	Frequency	Percentage
Attend school meetings	11	23.4
Pay school fees	20	42.6
Elect members of PTA	05	10.6
Contribute to school projects	08	17.0
None	03	6.4
Total	47	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 4.12 shows that respondents participate in supporting education service delivery processes in various ways. Specifically, 42.6% participate through paying school fees, 23.4% reported attending school meetings, 17% contribute to school projects, 10.6% said that they participate in electing members of PTA and additional 6.4% of respondents reported not participating in any activities. Findings reveal that respondents participating through paying school fees, which underscores the critical role of financial contributions in sustaining educational institutions. This high percentage indicates that many families prioritize education and are willing to invest in it, which is essential for maintaining school operations and improving resources. This finding reflects that UPE system which is predominant in all five schools under study prioritizes

monetary over substantive participation (Mugimu et al., 2013). This financial reliance on parents brings out equity issues, as UBOS (2021) documents that poorer households find it difficult to contribute.

Findings further indicate that parents attend school meetings which suggests a significant level of parental participation in the education service delivery processes across the five schools in Lira City East Division. Parents involvement in school activities is crucial for fostering a collaborative environment between parents and schools, which can lead to better educational outcomes for pupils. While low participation in governance processes indicate policy implementation gaps for citizens engagement (Cornwall, 2007). While findings indicate that there is substantial engagement of citizen in various aspects of education service delivery in Lira City East Division schools, there is also room for improvement in increasing participation and addressing barriers that prevent some families from being involved. Enhancing engagement across all these areas can lead to a more robust and effective education system as Joshi (2013) recommends for increased citizens awareness and developing strategies to enhance citizens engagement to ensure that all families can contribute and benefit from education as well as documenting social economic constraints to citizens meaningful participation in education service delivery processes (Okello et al., 2020).

4.3.2 The Participation of Pupils in School Activities

This section presents findings on how pupils engage in various school-based activities. The table below summarizes the findings.

Table 4.13: How Pupils Participate in School Activities

How pupils participate	Frequency	Percentage
Stand for prefect position	04	20
Attend assembly	06	30
Class monitor	03	15
Answering questions in class	03	15
Playing football	02	10
Running during games time	02	10
Total	20	100

Source: Filed Data, 2024

The data in Table 4.13 indicate that 30% of pupils participate by attending assemblies, making it the most common activity. Standing for prefect positions involves 20% of pupils, while 15% each participate as class monitors and in answering questions in class. Additionally, 10% of pupils engage in playing football and another 10% participate in running during games time. This shows a diverse range of activities that pupils are involved in, contributing to their overall educational experience.

This finding highlights the involvement of learners in a diverse range of activities, from attending assemblies to participating in sports, which supports their holistic development. It emphasizes structured group activities such as debates, sports, and clubs that foster social development (Kartika, 2024). Engaging in various activities helps develop skills like leadership, teamwork, communication, and physical fitness. There is a strong focus on developing leadership skills, providing pupils with opportunities to take responsibility, making decisions, and positively influencing their peers. The participation of pupils in leadership roles, such as prefect positions and class monitors, aligns with Sasaoka and Nishimura's (2010) findings, which emphasize building responsible learners in schools. However, literature indicates that many pupils remain passive participants, suggesting that their participation is at the lower steps of the ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969).

Furthermore, the participation in assemblies, classroom activities and extracurricular activities indicates that pupils are actively engaged in their educational environment. This active engagement is likely to enhance their learning experience and academic performance. Participating in sports activities like playing football and athletics highlights the importance of physical health and fitness. This aligns with the World Bank research findings that sports improve school attendance and mental health (World Bank, 2020).

4.3.3 Citizens’ Access to Information on Education Services

During the research, respondents were asked to report how they access information regarding school operations and below is a table summarizing findings.

Table 4.14: Access to Information on Education Services

Access	Frequency	Percentage
School meetings	08	11.9
Letter to parents	23	34.3
Word of mouth	11	16.4
Social media platforms	07	10.4
School assembly	12	17.9
Short Message Services (SMS)	06	9.0
Total	67	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

The data in Table 4.14 shows that the majority (34.3%) of respondents receive information from schools through letters to parents, indicating a continued reliance on traditional written communication. This is followed by school assemblies (17.9%) and word of mouth (16.4%), highlighting the importance of face-to-face interactions and informal networks for information dissemination. Only 11.9% of respondents receive information through school meetings. Digital platforms, such as social media (10.4%) and SMS (9.0%), are also used but to a lesser extent.

Findings indicate that letters to parents are predominantly used in all schools studied in Lira City East Division. Mugimu et al. (2013) observe that Uganda's education system maintains traditional, top-down communication approaches. However, this method limits access to information for many parents due to literacy barriers in Northern Uganda (Okello et al., 2020).

School assemblies and word-of-mouth are other means through which information is disseminated to parents in Lira City East Division. This means that school administrators give information to learners, who then pass it on to their parents by word of mouth. Gaventa (2004) supports this, asserting that informal community-based channels for communication often compensate for weak formal structures. This aligns with research findings on how marginalized populations frequently depend on social networks when institutional communication fails (Moore et al., 2002).

Further findings show low utilization of school meetings (11.9%) for information sharing, which aligns with Cornwall's (2007) argument about the gap between policy-mandated participation mechanisms and their practical implementation. This finding particularly echoes Joshi's (2013) identification of structural barriers that limit meaningful parental engagement in school governance.

Additionally, there is limited adoption of digital platforms, including SMS and social media, for information dissemination by schools in Lira City East Division. This demonstrates challenges noted by Mwesigye (2024) in implementing e-governance solutions in resource-constrained settings. This technological gap is reinforced by UBOS (2021), which notes limited digital infrastructure in Northern Uganda schools.

4.3.4 Citizens Knowledge of Existence and Formation of Functional School Management Committees (SMCs)

Understanding the formation and functions of School Management Committees (SMCs) is crucial for fostering effective community participation in the educational sector. SMCs play a pivotal role in the governance and management of schools, ensuring that educational policies and practices align with the needs and expectations of the community. This section presents the extent of citizens' knowledge about existence of SMCs, how SMCs are formed and their functionality.

4.3.3.1 Existence of Functional School Management Committees (SMCs)

Respondents were asked whether the schools their children attend have functional School Management Committees (SMCs). The findings are presented below.

Table 4.15: Existence of Functional School Management Committees

Existence of functional SMCs	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	46	78.0
No	06	10.2
Not sure	07	11.9
Total	59	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

The data in Table 4.15 indicate that majority of respondents (78%) reported existence of functional School Management Committees (SMCs) across the five schools. Meanwhile, 10.2% of respondents indicated that they were unaware of the existence of SMCs, and 11.9% were unsure. Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents are aware of SMCs, suggesting that these committees are well-established and recognized within school communities, potentially contributing to effective school governance and management. This reflects strong compliance with the Education Act (2008). However, 10.2% of respondents were unaware of the existence of SMCs, which could hinder their ability to engage with and benefit from the committees' activities and decisions. This highlights the need for improved communication and outreach efforts to ensure all community members are informed about the role and presence of SMCs.

The 11.9% of respondents who were unsure about SMC existence reflects a critical communication gap, reinforcing Cornwall's (2007) finding that participation mechanisms often fail when communities lack clear understanding of their roles and rights. This lack of knowledge can hinder effective participation and engagement in school governance processes. Addressing this uncertainty is crucial for fostering greater community involvement and ensuring that SMCs can effectively represent and serve the interests of all stakeholders.

While SMCs are formally established, the lack of full awareness reflects a policy disconnect and weak community participation, indicating that decentralization is not adequately enforced (Cornwall, 2007). The uncertainty among respondents suggests that schools must improve the impact, community engagement, and visibility of SMCs through meetings, notices, and local-language outreach (UBOS, 2021).

4.3.3.2 Citizens’ Knowledge on the Formation of SMCs

This study aimed to establish respondents’ knowledge on the formation of school management committees and the table below presents the findings:

Table 4.16: Knowledge on how SMCs are Formed

Knowledge on the formation of SMCs	Frequency	Percentage
Elected	31	41.9
Appointed	28	37.8
Do not know	15	20.3
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

The data in Table 4.16 reveals that 41.9% of respondents believe that School Management Committees (SMCs) are elected which implies that a significant number of respondents perceive the formation of SMCs as being elective. Meanwhile, 37.8% think that SMCs are appointed. Additionally, 20.3% are unaware of how SMCs are formed. This lack of awareness can hinder citizens active participation in SMC activities and school governance in general which in turn affects the SMC in the delivery of their duties.

Findings indicate that most responders agree that members of SMC are both elected and appointed which aligns well with the Education Act (2008) which states that SMCs are composed of members appointed and elected through a structured process involving parents, district council, the school, the old pupils’ association and foundation body.

The percentage of respondents who reported that they were unaware of how SMCs exemplifies their observation that policies often fail to meaningfully engage grassroots all stakeholders involved in education service delivery. This is mirrored by Joshi (2013) who states that SMCs

fail when communities lack capacity to engage. Joshi warns that without investment in civic education, governance structures such as SMCs remain underutilized. Cornwall (2007) argues that the gap between formal SMC structures and actual public awareness demonstrate a failure in implementing decentralization policy.

During a Focus Group Discussion FGD in Erute P/S community, parents admitted that having children in a particular school does not guarantee knowledge on the formation of a school governance structure.

“...many of us have children in these schools but we only hear that there is a school management committee, for me personally, I do not know who forms them and who gives them the powers...”. This voice from one of the parents indicated that as much as citizens have knowledge of the existence of SMCs, they know little about their formation.

4.3.3.3 Functions of School Management Committees

During this survey, respondents were asked to identify some of the functions of SMCs, and the table below summarizes their responses.

Table 4.17: Functions of School Management Committees

Functions of SMCs	Frequency	Percentage
Mobilizing parents to support school activities	21	30
Supervising school learning and projects	17	24.3
Managing the school with the headteacher	19	27.1
Getting money for school projects	07	10.0
Providing accountability to parents	06	8.6
Total	70	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Data presented in Table 4.17, indicate that all respondents were able to identify the functions of School Management Committees (SMCs). 30% of respondents reported mobilizing parents to

support school activities, followed by 27.1% respondents who reported managing the school alongside the Head teacher. 24.3% reported that SMCs supervise learning and projects while 10% reported that SMCs look for money for school projects 8.6% reported providing accountability to parents (8.6%).

Findings clearly show that respondents are aware of the functions of SMCs which range from oversight, lobbying and providing accountability. This finding validates literature that UPE bottom-up approach framework observes decentralized school governance structure which is instrumental in decision making (Mugimu et al., 2013).

While findings indicate awareness of the functions of SMCs at 100%, it should be noted that there are concerns of participation without empowerment. Gaventa (2004) notes that communities understand governance structures but lack the agency to influence their operations. This disconnect suggests that the recognition of the roles of SMCs have not translated into effective oversight in education service delivery.

Similarly, while findings and literature demonstrate that SMC framework has achieved formal compliance with decentralization policies (Education Act, 2008), it is yet to realize the transformative potential of community participation envisioned in the Local Government Act (2019) as amended.

During a focus group discussion, it was revealed that citizens often lack awareness of several government oversight structures or do not fully understand how these structures can facilitate their civic participation in service delivery processes. For example, in Lumumba, a community where Elia Olet Primary School is located, one discussant mentioned that:

“... for me I am member of PTA committee in one of the schools in this City but not Elia Olet P/S but when I go for a meeting, it is a must for the Head teacher to give us the accountability of what he has done. So, you find the weaknesses come to us people who are on the committee or the other parents who are in the village who don't know that it is our role to ensure learning goes on very well in schools...”

The statement above implies that most times decisions are made and only communicated with little room for discussion and amendment of decisions hitherto made. This tokenism participation deters citizens from actively engaging in the activities of SMCs.

In an FGD at St. Paul P/S community, parents singled out limitations of SMCs and they highlighted that some SMC members are appointed on the basis on know who; they added that many of them lack proper academic qualifications leading to poor performance. The influence of foundation bodies compromises the performance of SMCs. The foundation bodies want the school to be run the way they want but not based on someone's knowledge or experience. This limits opportunities for other community members to participate in the governance of schools.

During a key informant interview with the City Education Officer, he noted with concern that some Chairpersons of SMCs have overstayed while others keep coming back because the foundation bodies that have the mandate of selecting SMCs members keep bringing back the same people to push their interests.

"... in some schools, members are not elected but selected by the foundation bodies. Many of them do not even have their children in the schools they head. The overstay of SMC members has hindered the development of our City schools because community members have lost interest in some of them and as such their contribution is very much reduced...", stated the City Education Officer.

4.3.4 Citizens Negotiations on Education-related Service Delivery

This survey sought to ascertain the channels through which citizens negotiate for better education services in Lira City East Division. A section of respondents was asked about the channels they use for negotiation and table below presents a summary of findings.

Table 4.18: Channels through which citizens negotiate for better education services

Channels for citizens to negotiate	Frequency	Percentage
Parent Teacher Associations	16	25.4
Direct meeting with Head teachers	14	22.2
Talk to school management committees	04	6.3
NGOs meetings	13	20.6
Radio station	11	17.5
Local Council III Chairperson	05	7.9
Total	63	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

The data in Table 4.18 indicates that the most frequently used channels for citizens to negotiate education service delivery in the studied schools are Parent Teacher Associations (25.4%) and direct meetings with headteachers (22.2%). Additionally, 20.6% of respondents utilize NGO meetings, while 17.5% mention radio stations as a negotiation channel. A notable 7.9% of respondents negotiate through Local Council III chairpersons, and 6.3% use school management committees. This data highlights that Parent Teacher Associations and direct meetings with headteachers are the most popular negotiation channels, whereas school management committees are the least utilized.

Findings reveal that citizens prefer established and direct channels for negotiation. According to Mugimu et al. (2013), school level negotiation channels including PTA as avenues through which citizens engage in education governance. Citizens prefer the traditional face to face interactions with school administrators and governance structures for their perceived effectiveness and trustworthiness. This preference for informal, direct channels reflects the practical accessibility of these platforms for parents and community members, as opposed to more formalized structures.

Furthermore, findings highlight that NGOs play a significant role in providing channels for negotiation in Lira City East Division. The significant use of NGOs meetings and radio stations highlights the role of non-governmental organizations and media in facilitating citizen engagement with school leadership. Literature supports this by showing that NGOs and media can bridge gaps between citizens and authorities, providing platforms for marginalized voices. The two alternative channels resonate with Cornwall's (2007) finding that these channels create spaces for change that compliment formal governance channels. This finding particularly supports the Cornwall's emphasis on the importance of civil society and media in facilitating citizen engagement, especially where formal structures are weak or inaccessible.

There is a relatively low utilization of School Management Committees (SMCs) when it comes to negotiating education service delivery as reported by only 6.3% despite their mandated role under the Education Act (2008). This also corroborates with an argument about the gap between formal accountability structures and their practical implementation is eminently wide. This finding suggests that while SMCs exist on paper, they may lack the visibility, capacity, or perceived effectiveness to attract meaningful citizen participation (Josh, 2013).

During Focus Group Discussions it was discussed that despite the presence of governance structures in all schools, the level of citizenship voice and influence was reported to be low across the board. Most participants felt they had very little negotiation opportunities with school management committees and that they preferred meeting with the Head teacher at school. This sentiment stems from the fact that, even during meetings, headteachers and SMC members often have predetermined decisions, limiting genuine discussion. The lack of opportunities to voice concerns and the low levels of awareness of this right undermine citizens' participation in decision-making processes related to education service delivery. During a focus group discussion at Ireda community, one parent had this to say:

"...schools mainly organize school meetings involving parents at the end of the year when they want citizens to support things like construction of teachers' houses, providing meals but not consulting parents on how the school should exercise its mandates. Plans and priorities are made without involving parents or members of the community and citizens are given limited opportunities to negotiate ..."

The public officials who participated in this research attributed the low negotiation power of citizens to their disappointment with central and local government’s consistent failure to effectively deliver on political promises. The Mayor of Lira City East Division stated that:

“...people have pre-meditated negative opinions about our services and are very reluctant and unbothered to participate in most government programs. Probably this is because they have partly been disappointed with the various promises we have made according to the programs and services they are entitled to, and we have failed to fulfil them ...”

4.3.5. Citizens’ Frequency of Communication and Engagement with School Authorities and how Effective they Are

The frequency and effectiveness of communication and engagement between citizens and school authorities are critical factors in ensuring active participation in the educational process. To determine the level of engagement with school authorities and teachers, respondents were asked the frequency of communication and engagement with school authorities and below is a summary of findings.

Table 4.19: Frequency of Communication and Engagement with School Authorities

Frequency of communication and engagement	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	03	5.4
Weekly	08	14.3
Monthly	16	28.6
Termly	23	41.1
Never	06	10.7
Total	56	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

The data in Table 4.19 indicate that 41.1% of respondents engage with the schools on a termly basis indicating limited interaction and involvement of citizens in school activities. 28.6% of

respondents reported their interactions monthly while 14.3% reported weekly basis. 10.7% reported to never have any interactions with schools while only 5.4% reported to be engaging the school daily. There is high-level tokenistic participation by citizens in Lira City East Division demonstrating how current citizens engagement remains superficial rather than transformative. Mugimu et al. (2013) observes that the UPE system has failed to institutionalize meaningful community participation. This is also reinforced by Josh (2013) who critiques weak accountability mechanisms when engagement lacks structure and clarity.

Findings indicate that there are limited communication and engagement between citizens and schools, suggesting that there are still some barriers or challenges preventing full participation for citizens. Consistent communication and engagement with school authorities not only creates a supportive environment but also enhances collaboration between parents, teachers and other duty bearers which in the long run aligns with the goal of working towards achieving the common objectives of the school. These findings collectively underscore the urgent need for institutionalized engagement mechanisms, capacity building, and policy reforms to transform passive participation into the sustained, collaborative partnerships necessary for effective education service delivery (Otim, 2022).

The findings demonstrate that effective parent-administrator interactions could yield tangible benefits like timely decisions and performance feedback, which validates the principle of participatory governance (Faguet, 2012). However, the significant proportion of citizens who interacts intermittently reveals persistent communication gaps and uneven participation (Josh, 2013).

4.4 Objective Three: The Factors Responsible for Citizens' Insufficient Participation in the Education Service Delivery Processes in Lira City East Division

This section explores the various factors contributing to insufficient citizens' participation in education service delivery and suggested strategies to improve citizens' participation in education decision making processes.

4.4.1 Factors Responsible for Citizens' Insufficient Participation

During this survey, respondents were asked to identify the factors that contributed to their insufficient participation in school-related activities. The summary of findings is presented below.

Table 4.20: Factors Responsible for Insufficient Citizens' Participation

Factors for insufficient citizens' participation	Count	Percentage
Failure to account by school leaders	10	13.5
Weak and disempowered school governance structures	11	14.9
Limited access to information about school activities	11	14.9
Late communication and wrong communication channels	15	20.3
Illiteracy and low levels of self-esteem among parents	08	10.8
Negative attitude of school administrators towards parents	03	4.1
Busy schedules and conflicting priorities	16	21.6
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

The data presented in Table 4.20 indicate that a combination of logistical, informational, and relational factors contribute to insufficient citizen participation in school-related activities. The most significant factor, reported by 21.6% of respondents, is busy schedules and conflicting priorities, suggesting that many parents struggle to engage with school activities due to other commitments. Late communication and incorrect communication channels by schools were the second most cited factor, affecting 20.3% of respondents. Other factors included weak and disempowered school governance structures (14.9%), failure to account by school leaders (13%), illiteracy and low self-esteem among parents (10.8%), and negative attitudes of school administrators towards parent participation (4.1%).

The findings highlight significant obstacles to effective citizen participation in school governance in Lira City East Division. Respondents identify time constraints and competing priorities as their main challenges, emphasizing the practical difficulties parents encounter in balancing school engagement with livelihood demands. Okello et al. (2020) found that

subsistence farmers and informal workers in Lira City often miss school meetings due to socioeconomic pressures.

Communication failures emerge as the second most significant obstacle, affecting 20.3% of respondents who get late notifications and inappropriate channels. These operational shortcomings demonstrate what Josh (2013) identified as systemic exclusion when schools rely on poorly timed, single channel communications that disadvantage marginalized parents. Schools are not consistently meeting even foundational communication requirements for meaningful citizens' engagement.

The finding regarding structural weaknesses in school governance systems reveals systemic implementation challenges in Lira City East Division's education sector. As Mugimu et al. (2013) document in their evaluation of Uganda's Universal Primary Education policy, these governance gaps represent a persistent implementation paradox where formal participation structures like School Management Committees exist on paper but lack operational capacity in practice.

Literacy disparities further worsen participation challenges within the division, with over 10% of respondents reporting difficulties in reading. The UNDP (2019) notes that this literacy gap, where less educated parents struggle to navigate school systems, results in low engagement in education service delivery processes. This highlights the need for schools to implement more inclusive communication strategies and support mechanisms to ensure all parents can effectively participate in their children's education.

4.4.2 Strategies to improve citizens' participation

During this survey, respondents were asked to suggest ways through citizens' participation in education service delivery can be improved. They provided the following responses.

Table 4.21: Strategies to Improve Citizens' Participation

Strategies	Count	Percentage
Awareness creation and sensitization	09	12.2
Improve communication	16	21.6
Create online platforms	12	16.2
Strengthen governance structures	14	18.9
Promote transparency	13	17.6
Create a welcoming and friendly school environment	07	9.5
Termly meetings	03	4.0
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

The data presented in Table 4.21 highlight several strategies to improve citizen participation in school-related activities. Improving communication was cited by 21.6% of respondents, followed by strengthening governance structures, which was mentioned by 18.9% of respondents. Promoting transparency was suggested by 17.6% of respondents as another effective way to enhance participation. Creating online platforms was cited by 16.2% of respondents, indicating the importance of leveraging digital tools. Awareness creation and sensitization were believed to improve participation by 12.2% of respondents. Additionally, 9.5% of respondents suggested creating a welcoming and friendly school environment, while 4.0% recommended holding termly meetings.

These findings suggest that there should be improved communication. Josh (2013) suggests that standardized, multi-channel communication systems can reduce information gap plaguing citizens participation in education service delivery processes. Okello et al. (2020) recommend scheduled SMS alerts combined with community radio announcements an approach which successfully worked in information dissemination.

Findings further call for strengthening school governance structures. This recommendation is in line with recommendations that structural gaps need to be addressed as emphasized by Mugimu et al. (2013). They argue that capacity-building programs for School Management Committees directly address this need to influence citizens participation and enhance learning outcomes.

Respondents recommend that school administrators within the division should enhance accountability to win citizens' trust. This recommendation echoes findings that accountability concept which shows how visible decision-making processes not only exhibit transparency but also builds trust (Gaventa, 2004).

Further findings recommended the use of digital platforms which also reflects the call by UNDP (2019) for school leaderships to embrace technology in bridging participation gaps though the World Bank (2009) cautions that digital solutions require literacy support in contexts like rural areas. Relatedly, there is need for continuous sensitization on the benefits of participating in education service delivery. Pharr et al. (2000) state that targeted sensitization can activate networks and create critical mass participation.

Finally, findings still show that approaches such as termly school meetings encourage citizens participation which aligns with the minimum standards of the Education Act (2008). Similarly, school administrators were rallied to offer welcoming environments to parents where trust-building enables meaningful collaboration.

4.5 Objective Four: Other Factors Responsible for the Current State of Education Service Delivery in Lira City East Division

During this study, respondents identified several additional factors contributing to the current state of education services in Lira City East Division. The table below summarizes these findings.

Table 4.22: Others Factors Responsible for the Current State of Education Service

Other Factors	Count	Percentage
Political influence	13	17.6
Influence of foundation bodies	11	14.9
Poor government education policies	12	16.2
Weak governance structures	07	9.5
Poor city and division leadership	12	16.2
Poor economic status of parents	06	8.1
Bad state of roads to schools	05	6.8
Corruption and greed	08	10.8
Total	74	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Data presented in Table 4.22 summarizes several other factors contributing to the current state of education services in Lira City East Division. The most significant factor is political influence cited by 17.6% of respondents followed by poor government education policies reported by 16.2% of respondents. The influence of foundation bodies is mentioned by 14.9% of respondents. While Corruption and greed are noted by 10.8% of respondents. Additionally, weak governance structures are cited by 9.5% of respondents.

The finding on political influence disrupting citizens participation aligns directly with power analysis as presented by Gaventa (2004). The power analysis documents that local political actors often co-opt school governance structures and use this platform to front their own interests. In some schools, the appointment of Head teachers in politically motivated which undermines merit-based appointments (Okello et al., 2020).

There are notable policy implementation gaps as cited by respondents. The Education Act (2008) has all regulatory frameworks and guides for effective education service delivery but has fallen

short of implementation. Mugimu et al. (2013) argue that well intentioned policies have failed due to disconnect between formulation and local execution. A section of respondents reported that foundation bodies are major obstacles to citizens participation in education service delivery processes. The competition between government and religious bodies create governance confusion and collision where institutional mandates overlap (Cornwall, 2007)

Weak governance structures as reported by respondents reaffirms the consistent theme of structural deficiencies where Faguet (2012) notes that decentralization without capacity building creates governance vacuums. The findings suggests that these weaknesses may be more entrenched than governance-related participation barriers. Relatedly, rampant corruption is a major hinderance to citizens effective participation. Moore et al. (2002) reaffirm that school funds are misappropriated annually in a syndication involving Headteachers and some members of governance structures.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented and analysed the data collected from the field in alignment with the study's objectives. The analysis has led to the identification of key findings, which have been thoroughly discussed. The next chapter will provide a summary of these findings, draw conclusions based on the analysis, and offer recommendations for future actions and improvements.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions are drawn from the findings of the research and recommendations are drawn based on the conclusions of the study.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The research examined the factors affecting citizens' participation in education service delivery in Lira City East Division and below are the key findings summarized objective by objective.

Objective One: The Magnitude and Quality of Education Service Delivery in Lira City East Division

The study revealed several gaps in the quality and accessibility of education services in Lira City East Division. There are infrastructure gaps across all the five schools. There is overcrowding in classrooms which exceeds the national recommended teacher-pupil ratio of 1:55 with some schools operating as high as 1:99. Sanitation facilities are critically inadequate with some schools having 350 pupils sharing one latrine which is against the WHO and Uganda national standards of 1:40 and 1:60 for girls and boys respectively. Three of the five schools did not have libraries, limiting learners' access to reading materials. There are persistent teacher shortages in all the five schools leading to unsustainable workloads and worsening the already-poor learning outcomes. Despite over 57.7% of teachers holding diplomas, pupils' performance in the national Primary Leaving Examinations remains low, suggesting systematic issues beyond qualifications. Drop-out rates remain a key concern particularly among female learners who are faced by socio-economic pressures.

Objective Two: The Current Level of Citizens' Participation in Education Service Delivery Processes in Lira City East Division.

Whereas findings indicate that all schools had school management committees, their formation and functionality gaps still exist among citizens. The citizens are not aware how members of School Management Committees are selected. The effective functionality of SMCs was

weakened by political interferences, overstaying members who are appointed by foundation bodies. The study further revealed that the participation of citizens in education service delivery processes in Lira City East remains minimal partly due to inadequate information and poor communication channels. Participation is often reduced to paying school fees and other financial contributions, and parents rarely attend meetings. Pupils' involvement is only passive with their participation limited to attending assemblies. Most parents being engaged in socio-economic activities in Lira City, decision-making processes are dominated by school administration and governance structures rather than community representatives, which leads to perceptions of parental exclusion.

Objective Three: The Factors Responsible for Citizens' Insufficient Participation in the Education Service Delivery Processes in Lira City East Division

Study findings reveal multiple barriers to citizens' active participation in education service delivery processes in Lira City East Division. One of them is the impromptu or delayed communication by the school administrators whereby letters are circulated one or two days prior to the meetings days. The governance structures are deemed weak and are not transparent in their dealings which has eroded trust in school leadership away from citizens' trust. Findings also show that many citizens do not participate due to logistical constraints as well as work schedules. Other findings include negative attitude of school administrators as well as the illiteracy of parents.

Objective Four: Other Factors Responsible for the Current State of Education Service Delivery in Lira City East Division

The study revealed several critical factors undermining education service delivery in Lira City East Division. Political influence where local leaders frequently interfere in school governance and Head teacher appointments. The poor implementation of government education policies was highlighted as a major concern affecting education service not only in Uganda but also in Lira City Division. Foundation bodies were found to exert considerable amount of pressure, often creating conflicts with government mandates in schools. Additionally, corruption and mismanagement of school resources including funds misappropriation by school administrators were reported. The school governance structures were found to be responsible for the current

education status in Lira City East Division. Other factors include poor local leadership, citizen apathy, the economic status of parents and poor and inaccessible roads.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings above, the following conclusions are drawn.

Although several policy and legal frameworks exist at global, regional and national levels to promote citizen participation in governance service delivery processes, their effective implementation has been hindered by political interference, systematic corruption and structural inefficiencies.

It is also clear that structural barriers including over-crowding in classrooms, inadequate sanitation facilities and teacher shortages directly compromise education quality across schools in this study in Lira City East Division.

Evidence further shows that low citizen-engagement in school activities reflects tokenistic participation rather than meaningful involvement in the planning, implementation and monitoring of school activities.

Furthermore, socio-economic factors alongside cultural norms such as early marriages, poverty, unemployment, stereotypes among others have negatively impacted on learning in Lira City East Division. Marginalized groups and young girls have been discouraged from pursuing education due to external pressure from society. These barriers are not just peripheral issues but central to the East Division's crisis. Without tackling gender norms, exclusions, universal primary education will remain ineffective in the division.

The top-down policy-making and weak accountability mechanisms perpetuate the cycle of exclusion where women, rural communities and the economically disadvantaged citizens are side-lined in decision-making and service delivery processes. The research also highlights opportunities for positive reforms including strengthening the capacity governance structures, improving communication channels and enforcing anti-corruption measures.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions arrived at above, the following recommendations are made:

The study recommends that Lira City leadership should put in place mechanisms to address immediate challenges of inadequate structure by constructing additional classrooms, libraries and improve sanitation facilities to the meet the national standards. This can be done through

strategic partnerships with NGOs and community stakeholders. Similarly, address the teacher staffing gaps to achieve the mandated 1:53 teacher-pupil ratio supplemented by continuous teacher professional development programs. School leadership should introduce remedial lessons for girls and finally the City authorities should improve access to electricity, roads and construct disability friendly infrastructure for equitable education access.

The study recommends strengthening participatory governance in schools and across Lira City East Division by implementing comprehensive civic education programs through partnerships with NGOs, religious institutions and media outlets to raise awareness about citizens roles and SMC election procedures while establishing transparent selection processes for members to replace the current foundation led appointments. Schools should adopt more inclusive engagement strategies including digital platforms like WhatsApp and bulk SMSs for wider information dissemination and institutionalize mandatory termly reporting of on school finances and academic performance to enhance accountability.

The school leadership should conduct targeted sensitization campaigns via local radios and community dialogues to emphasize the value of parental involvement in education service delivery processes. Schools should implement flexible meeting schedules, adopt hybrid approaches and promote anonymous feedback mechanisms to accommodate working parents. Capacity building initiatives for SMC and school administrators should be designed with a focus on participatory planning and inclusive governance.

The Ministry of Education and Sports should implement policy reforms against personalizing school governance and enforcing stricter oversight of foundation bodies according to the Education Act (2008). The government anti-corruption watchdogs should institute stringent measures and transparent procurement systems to reduce on mismanagement of school resources.

5.4 Area for Further Research

This study focused on factors affecting citizens' participation in education service delivery in Lira City East Division covering five out of thirty public schools. To allow for generalization and planning in Lira City, further study could be conducted covering 50% of existing primary

schools in the two Divisions of Lira City. The larger study would test whether the findings in this research hold true across the broader sample and thus increasing credibility of recommendations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide for duty bearers

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DUTY BEARERS (CDO, CEO, DIS, H/T, SCAO)

District: _____	Respondent: _____
Title: _____	Division / Sub County
Interviewer: _____	Date _____

1. What does community participation mean to you in education service delivery?
2. How do citizens around this school participate in education service delivery processes?
3. Which forums exist in this division for discussing public concerns on education service delivery?
4. Are there any challenges you encounter as leaders when mobilizing citizens for meetings or engagements?
5. Who participates at the planning meetings at schools? (**Probe for participation of youth, women, pupils' leadership and PWDs**)
6. Who appoints the members of the oversight committees?
7. How does the school oversight committee (SMCs and PTA) participate in education service delivery processes?
8. How does the participation of these committees and citizens lead to quality education service delivery?
9. What hinders citizens' participation in education service delivery processes?
10. How can such problems be addressed to ensure especially participation of citizens and delivery of quality education services?
11. Which other factors contribute to the current state of education service delivery?
12. What are the main challenges hindering effective education service delivery in this division?
13. What capacity building initiatives have been taken to empower citizens to participate? (probe for public speaking, monitoring, demanding accountability)

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for community members

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

Community Interviewed: _____	School: _____
Ward: _____	Cell: _____
Interviewer _____	Date: _____

1. What does participation in service delivery mean to you?
2. Which service delivery processes have you participated in (*probe for education*)
3. Which platforms exist in this school where citizens can participate? (*probe for SMC, PTA*)
4. How do you participate in the affairs of the schools in your community? (*probe meetings, monitoring, members of SMC, PTA etc*).
5. How do you get information about school activities in your community (*probe for letters, word of mouth*)
6. What do you see as benefits of citizens participating in education service delivery processes in this community?
7. As a parent, what are your responsibilities in the delivery of quality education in this school or community?
8. What do you see as challenges hindering citizens from participating in the delivery of education services in this community?
9. Which capacity building should be undertaken to empower citizens to participate in education service delivery processes? (**Probe for public speaking, advocacy, monitoring etc**)

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Pupils

FGD GUIDE FOR LEARNERS (PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS)

School: _____ **Category:** _____

Class: _____ **Date:** _____

1. Can you share what you like most about your school and the education you receive? (*probe for the participants' understanding and experiences of education services*)
2. Are you satisfied with the performance of your school in the national exams? (*probe for the reasons*)
3. What kind of challenges do you face as learners in this school. How were you involved in handling those challenges?
4. How are learners involved in decision making processes at your school? (*probe for participation of prefects, school projects etc*)
5. Have you or someone you know ever suggested a change or improvement at school? What happened?
6. In what ways do your parents or guardians participate in activities at your school? (*probe views on family, meetings, and community involvement*)
7. How do you think the community (like people living near your school) can help to make your school better?
8. How your does your school communicate to you new decisions? (*probing for communication and Feedback*)
9. If you could make one big change to improve your school, what would it be and why?
10. What kind of support do you think schools need from the government or other organizations to make education better for learners like you?

Appendix 4: Interview guide for teachers

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

School: _____
Division / Sub-County: _____
Parish / Ward: _____
Cell / Village: _____
Interviewers: _____ Date: _____

1. What does participation in service delivery mean to you?
2. How have you as teachers participated in education service delivery in this school and the division in general?
3. How do you perceive the level of participation of parents and the local community in the education service delivery process? (*probe for reasons for and against*)
4. How does the level of citizen participation impact the effectiveness of education service delivery?
5. What are some of the effective ways through which citizens can participate in the affairs of schools?
6. What major challenges do you face in delivering education services effectively? How do these challenges affect teaching and learning outcomes?
7. As a teacher, how do you encourage parents and community members to participate in the educational process? (*probing for role of teachers in fostering participation*)
8. How does resource and infrastructure availability affect your ability to deliver quality education?
9. Why do you think the participation of citizens is low in education service delivery processes?
10. What factors are responsible for the current state of education in your school and Lira City East Division?
11. Suggest ways through which education service delivery can be improved in this school and the division at large.

Appendix 5: Observation checklist

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

<p>Instructions for the Observer</p> <p>i). Remain objective and non-intrusive during observations.</p> <p>ii). Use a mix of direct observation, informal conversations, and review of available documents or records to gather data.</p> <p>iii). Ensure confidentiality and respect for the participants and institutions involved.</p> <p>General Information</p> <p>Date of Observation: Time:</p> <p>Location..... Observer’s Name.....</p>			
Criterion	Yes	No	Observation notes
Condition of educational facilities in terms of infrastructure (e.g., number of classroom blocks, number of toilets, library etc).			
Availability of learning materials and resources (books, laboratory equipment).			
The friendliness of classrooms for persons with disability – ramps			
Teachers are in class and delivering a lesson. Learning is taking place			
Use of textbooks and other learning aids during lessons			

Any feedback and response tools in the school such as a suggestion box			
The school has a talking compound and a friendly learning environment.			
Any extra cocurricular activities and facilities; learners involved in games, a playground			
Any parent involved in school activities such as slashing compound, playground etc			

Other Observations (not captured above)

Appendix 6: Questionnaire

7/14/25, 3:19 PM

My Name is Charles Ebunyu, a Student of Uganda Martyrs University pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies. I a.

My Name is Charles Ebunyu, a Student of Uganda Martyrs University pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies. I am conducting a study on Factors Affecting the Participation of Citizens in Education Service Delivery Processes in Lira City.

Thank you for accepting to participate in this important survey. Your insights and experiences are vital to understanding the relationship between citizens' participation and the effectiveness of education service delivery in Lira City East Division. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic purpose.

Name

Optional

Gender

- Male
 Female

How old are you?

- 15 - 24 Years
 25 - 34 Years
 35+ Years

What is the duration of your stay in Lira City East Division?

- Less than 5 months
 Less than 1 year
 More than 1 year
 Not more than 5 years
 5+ years

What is your occupation?

- Still in school and not working
- Unpaid work
- Peasant farmer
- Unemployed
- Self employed / business
- Civil servant
- Corporate worker (INGO, Civil Society, NGO, Bank, Media, government parastatal)

Do you have any children or relatives studying in Lira City East Division?

- Yes
- No

Who owns the school where your children or relatives study in Lira City

- Government
- Religious / Faith Based Organization
- NGO
- Private

How would you rate your awareness of educational services offered in Lira City East Division?

- Very high
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very low

How satisfied are you with the quality of education services in Lira City East Division?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

As a parent / guardian, how do you participate in education service deliver processes in a school where your children go or near you?

What do you perceive as the main factors barring parents / guardians from participating in school activities

In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges facing education service delivery in Lira City

How would you rate the accessibility of educational facilities nearest to you?

- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very poor

How well do educational services meet the needs of your children?

- Very well
- Well
- Moderately
- Poorly
- Very poorly

How frequently do you communicate with teachers or school administrators?

- Very frequently
 - Frequently
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
-

How effective do you find the communication between the school and parents?

- Very effective
- Effective
- Neutral
- Ineffective
- Very ineffective

To what extent have you been able to negotiate and caused a policy change with the school administrators?

- Full negotiation and participation
- High level negotiation and participation
- Some negotiation and participation
- Limited negotiation and participation
- No negotiation

Do you have a functional school management committee in the school where your children / relatives attend?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

In your own view, what do these management committees do? (multiple answers apply)

- Manage schools with Headteachers
- Mobilize parents to support school activities
- Supervise school projects and constructions
- Ensure pupils attend school
- Mobilize resources for infrastructural development

How do you influence decisions relating to education in your community (Multiple answers allowed)?

- Attend school meetings
- Elect members of school governance structure
- Contribute to school projects
- Member of school governance structure
- None

What kind of information are you provided with about your child's progress and school activities?

What barriers do you face in participating more actively in your child's or relatives education activities?

In your opinion, what measures could be taken to improve citizen participation in education service delivery?

How do you think communication between parents and educational authorities can be improved?

Do you believe that increased citizens' participation would lead to more effective education service delivery?

- Yes
- No

What positive outcomes have you noticed arising from citizens' / parents' involvement in education service delivery in Lira City?

What role do you think parents should play in education planning and service delivery?

What factors are responsible for poor education service delivery in Lira City (Multiple answers allowed)

- Poor education policy
- Poor City and Division leadership
- Weak school governance structures
- Corruption and greed
- The policy of decentralization
- General economic status of parents
- Limited participation of parents

What kind of support do you think schools need from government or other organizations to make education better for learners?

What changes would you like to see in the educational services provided in Lira City East Division?

General comments if not captured above

Appendix 7: Introductory letter

Uganda
MARTYRS
University



making a difference

Date: May29th 2024.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Assistance for Research:

Greetings and best wishes from Uganda Martyrs University. This letter is to introduce to you **Mr Ebunyu Charles 2019-M092-40006** who is a student at Uganda Martyrs University. As part of the requirements for the award of a Master of Arts Development Studies, the student is expected to submit a dissertation, which involves a field research carried out in an institution of learning/an organisation/institution or office.

His topic: Factors Affecting Citizens' Participation in Service Delivery Processes in Lira City
A case of Education Service in Lira City East Division

The purpose of this letter is to request for your permission to allow and facilitate the student in carrying out this survey. Your support will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr.Odoki Richard,
Academic Coordinator, Mbale Campus

