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Examining the Effects of Extra Charges on Accessibility to Universal Secondary Education: A Case of Selected Church of Uganda Grant-Aided Schools in Namirembe Diocese.

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the effect of extra charges on accessibility to USE among the intended beneficiaries, with 2 objectives; to analyze government funding on education quality in use schools and to assess government funding on other non- tuition school needs on accessibility of education in the Universal Secondary Schools. Using a mixed method approach and a sample size of 60 participants, the researcher relied on questionnaires and interviews as the data collection tools. Data was analyzed using SPSS and applied both descriptive and inferential statistics for interpretation of findings. The findings revealed that there is a strong relationship between funding and extra charges in schools at the 0<0.01 level (2 tailed) and that schools have to source other means of income to supplement government funding and that inadequate

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funding affects schools accessibility. The study therefore recommended that the government and the Ministry of Education and Sport should disburse an adequate capitation grant to improve the management of students' learning, this calls for an increase in the money allocated to each student.

***Keywords**: Universal Primary Education (UPE), Universal secondary education (USE), Extra Charges*

INTRODUCTION

Uganda is one of the first African countries to implement free education; Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced in 1997 and Universal secondary education (USE) in 2007. to make secondary education more accessible, particularly for the increased number of children graduating from primary school level (Chapman, 2009; and as a strategy to support vulnerable communities in accessing post primary education Asankha & Takashi, 2014), The provision of free education has received priority focus in Uganda because of the associated opportunities and benefits for social and economic development as envisaged by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Patrinos, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of USE increased access to secondary education for economically vulnerable families and communities. Resultantly, secondary schools enrolment grew from 954,000 in 2007 to 1.5 million by 2016 (World bank, 2018) particularly because of Government's commitment to funding the program, with parents only encouraged to meet feeding costs for their Children Nevertheless, numerous USE schools have continuously levied charges on learners under the USE program, insisting that the money which government allocates per child is completely inadequate (Daily Monitor, 9th April 2014) For example in 2023 the Government allotted 58,000 and 90000 UgX lower and advanced for each USE program participant per term respectively

(Daily Monitor, 14th April 2023). In comparison to fees in purely private schools where every average secondary school student pays 500,000 UgX, school managers argue that what government remits is very inadequate to meet quality education expectations. In 2021, the cabinet mooted a directive to abolish charges in UPE/USE schools. The phenomenon has led to arrest of several head teachers while others faced interrogation (Kisekka, 2021).

The situation has prompted key stake holders in Education including faith based foundation bodies to advocate for parents contribution in order to run their schools. According to Kiguli,(2024), Bishop Kagodo of Mukono diocese decried that stopping parents to pay some money to facilitate their children's education is unfair especially when it is crystal clear that the government does not provide enough funds to run the free education program as it envisaged. The same notion is alluded to by; Mwesigwa(2022), that the Church and all key stakeholders have taken the notion of commitment to new levels since the overwhelming majority of learners in the school walk barefoot, carry packed lunch, study from dilapidated buildings.This study then sought to analyse the reasons for C.O.U government aided schools. School charges albeit the governments free education policy.

Literature Review

Funding of Secondary Education by Government refers to the provision of resources needed to facilitate a secondary school (Muyibwa, 2004). The Government makes an annual commitment known as the Capitation grant to help fund students education. At the moment the Government allots shillings 17,000 for each primary school student and shillings 56,000shs for each USE program participant (The Independent, September 18, 2023).

The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, (2018) is cognizant of challenges in provision of quality secondary education and a dire need for more resources towards secondary education Considering the SDGs, goal No.4 emphasizes the need for ‘quality education' by ensuring that education is inclusive and promotes lifelong learning (United Nations, 2012). For this goal to be achieved, governments and donors need to commit resources to mitigate factors that limit attainment of quality education.

Government Funding and Access to Universal Secondary Education:

Scholarly research highlights the importance of government funding in expanding access to secondary education in Uganda according to Oketch and Rolleston, (2014) argue that increased government expenditure on education, particularly in the form of subsidies and capitation grants, has led to significant improvements in enrollment rates and reduction of barriers to access for marginalized populations. Mwesigwa(2022), further asserts that the Church and all key stakeholders have taken the notion of commitment to new levels since the overwhelming majority of pupils in the school walk barefoot, carry packed lunch, study from dilapidated buildings and parents can only manage a top up fee of only 15,000sh a term per child!"

However, challenges remain in ensuring equitable distribution of resources and addressing infrastructural constraints in rural areas (Tusiime, 2018). According to the World Bank (2017) there is an increased enrolment especially in primary schools the ratio of students completing lower primary school in Sub Saharan Africa where Uganda is situated increased from 23% in 1990 to 42 in 2024, this percentage however, is still very low compared to the 75 of the global ratio and worse still due to dominant oral traditions and lack of learning facilities enrolment rates on which government measure literacy might not reflect a full picture regarding literacy on the continent.

It appears that although the goal to increase accessibility was achieved, less attention is given to the adequate funding of the program which impacts on the quality of education offered under this arrangement hence living schools with no alternative other than charging parents in order to meet some demands.

Impact of Government Funding and Quality Education

While government funding has contributed to increased access, scholars have raised concerns about its impact on educational quality. Mwesigye and Anguyo (2017) point out that inadequate funding has led to overcrowded classrooms, shortage of qualified teachers, and lack of instructional materials, undermining the quality of teaching and learning in USE schools. Furthermore, research by Birungi and Batambuze (2019) suggests that disparities in funding allocation between urban and rural schools exacerbate inequalities in educational outcomes and student performance.

Un-institutionalized School Feeding Programmes

School feeding programmes are usually undertaken as a strategy to increase access and participation of children in primary and secondary education. Available evidence suggests that stabilizing food availability in schools stimulates increased enrolments and school attendance rates and thereby, reducing absenteeism. Food availability in schools also reduces malnutrition which is a predisposing factor for stunting (which is responsible for mental and physical retardation that impairs normal growth and cognitive development of children). The Universal Education policy gives the responsibility of feeding children to the parents. This policy has not been generally successful in meeting its objective. The rampant student's absenteeism in the country is partly attributed to lack of institutionalized school feeding program (CoU Directorate of Education Report, 2019).

Besides the need for adequate funding, Kyeyune and Nsubuga (2020) advocate for increased transparency and accountability in resource allocation, with a focus on targeting funds to the most disadvantaged schools and regions. Additionally, Nkumbi and Mawa (2016) emphasize the importance of investing in comprehensive teacher training and professional development programs to improve instructional quality and student achievement. Funding improves the quality of Universal Secondary Education, which transcends into an empowered citizenry and productive labor force (World Bank, 2017). The increase of funds within the USE schools can help the policy implementers to ensure efficiency of the allocated funds, however under circumstances of insufficient funding; the policy implementers are forced to levy extra resources to meet the daily demands. Such funds generated mainly by parents and donors as alluded to by (Baghdady& Zaki, 2019). Nevertheless, in a local school context, the ultimate source of this funding is a parent's contribution which may be determined by the school's board of governors or the Parents Teachers Association under the guidance of the head teacher.

Quality Concerns in USE Implementation

Apart from the growing number of both primary and secondary schools, teachers on government pay roll have remained inadequate. For example out the 347,219 according to EMIS (2015), the government employs 266,290 at all levels of education. Primary section reckoning to 184,275 while as secondary schools take 67,168, this implies that even government aided schools are largely depending on privately supported teachers save for purely established private schools, handling sensitive subjects including science, languages and mathematics (Church of Uganda Directorate of Education report 2022).

Apart from the aforementioned, Ministry of Education finds it difficult to transfer some teachers from one school to another due to the financial variations of different schools. Mwesigwa(2022) observed that an unprecedented transfer may imply that such teachers will find themselves indebted to banks beyond their capacity to pay as a result of being transferred to non-fee paying government aided primary or secondary schools that do not offer top-up allowances.

According to Kitubi (2024) government issued a ban on schools both public and private from levying a total of 12 fees charges including property fees; foundation fees; development fees, examination fees or assessment fees among others. The cabinet resolution intends to make education more affordable and to ensure implementation of free and compulsory universal education. Premising on the above Mwesigwa (2022) argues that political interventions in the affairs of education may not provide a compound solution to education challenges like poor infrastructures, absenteeism of teachers and learners as well as high rates of academic failures. He further observes that “Blaming hiked school fee charges and school drop out on school leadership management and foundation bodies is a red herring and displaced aggression” the matter of education is very sensitive and calls for all stake holders.

Research Methodology

The study used both quantitative and qualitative to analyze:
Most mixed studies include both qualitative and quantitative questions and indicate the logic of design. If both types of data are collected concurrently, it gives equal opportunity to each (Schumacher, 2014). As illustrated in the table 1 below, the study considered a total population of 100, inclusive of teachers, staff administrators and chaplains from Namirembe Diocese under the central region which covers the districts of Kampala and Wakiso. From the above progression, a sample size of 60 participants of the aforementioned categories was considered.

Figure 1: Sample frame showing category of respondents

Category of Respondents	**Population**	**Sample Size**	**Sampling Technique**
1	Teachers and Chaplains	36	Random
2	Administrators	24	Purposive
	Total Sample	60	

Regarding data collection methods, the study applied a two data collection method for accumulation for the required data. The two methods were questionnaires to collect data from teachers and chaplains whereas interviews were used to obtain data from schools administrators. The 60-sample size is justified by Kieser and Wassmer (1996) who concluded that the total pilot sample sizes of 20 to 40 will be adequate for applying Browne's method in power analysis. This was to guarantee the research principles of triangulation as portrayed in the figure below.

Figure 2:

Method	**Instrument**
Survey	Questionnaire
Interview	Interview guide
Documentary review	Document checklist

In regards to data collection from the field, this was done by means of a questionnaire which was distributed and filled by the teachers and chaplains in the diocese of Namirembe. The self-administered questionnaire had 18 items of these, 5 were on nominal scale while the remaining 13 were on a five-point Likert scale of: 1-5 as follows:

1 = strongly disagree,

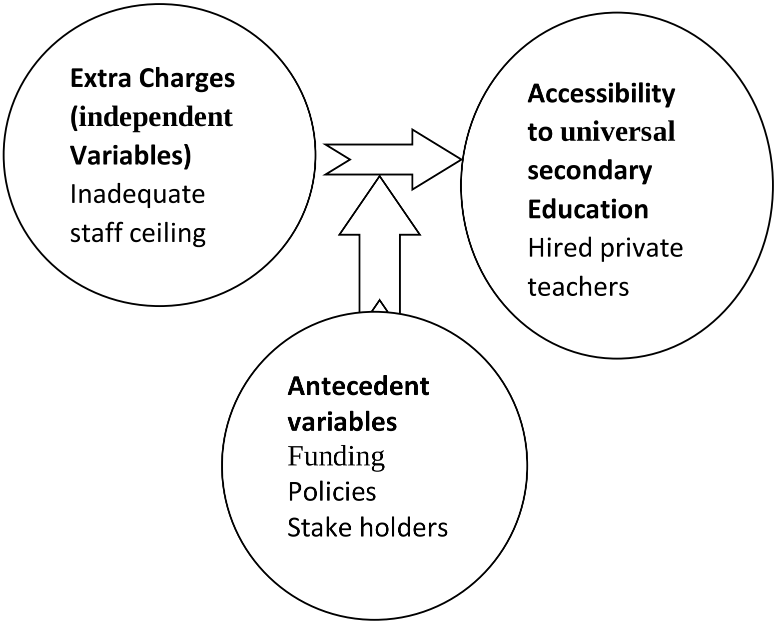
2 =disagree,

3 = neutral,

4 = agree, and

5 = strongly agree.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework



Schools charge extra fees to meet the unmet needs of the schools by Government funding like field work for students, hiring private teachers, providing lunch for learners, construction and renovations among others, this enable schools to hire and motivate teachers, feed students, put up more infrastructure to accommodate a number of students in the universal Secondary Education program which culminates into effective accessibility of Education. However, presence of a well stipulated policy guidelines, laws, engagement of stakeholders and resource availability are fundamental mediating factors as portrayed above

Findings of the study

Figure 4: The statistical correlation data

		I am aware that parents contribute money to schools for children's feeding
I agree to the fact that some schools charge extra fees for non-institutional reasons	Pearson Correlation	.908*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033
	N	5
There is need for the Government to review the funding model of schools under USE	Pearson Correlation	.775
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.123
	N	5
Head teachers charge to cater for lunch, private teachers and teacher accomodation	Pearson Correlation	.915*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029
	N	5
It is true that schools' extra charges cause schools drop out and abseeintism	Pearson Correlation	.836
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.077
	N	5
Tuition fees which are emitted to schools should be uniform	Pearson Correlation	.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.961
	N	5
I am aware that parents contribute money to schools for children's feeding	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	5

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 4 above shows that there was a significant relationship between government funding and extra charges on government grant aided USE schools P 0.01 shows that there is evidence against the null hypothesis. The inference indicated that it was important to introduce USE. This strong response implies that apart from the challenges of USE, all education stakeholders admit that the program was to positively contribute to the wellness of children as far as Education is concerned. Similar sentiments are shared with the education administrators whose views are covered by the interviews for instance, it was expressed that Universal Secondary Education created opportunity to the school dropouts to access school especially those who could not afford exorbitant school fees.

Nevertheless, the study observed that the high numbers of enrolment in most of the USE schools have compromised education standards. Underfunding therefore has a direct and detrimental impact on the quality of education in Uganda. Schools frequently operate with outdated or insufficient learning materials such as Textbooks which are often shared among several students hence hampering individual learning and limiting the effectiveness of instruction. Moreover, the physical condition of many school facilities is poor, with overcrowded classrooms and inadequate sanitation facilities, which can negatively impact students' health and concentration. This is attributed to the scanty amount which government allocates for each learner limited to only Ug 50,000shs per term. This was confirmed by the Pearson correlation at -660 implied that government's allocation of funds per child is very minimal hence exposing the schools to expenses that they should meet using other sources.

The study further revealed that there is need for the Government to review the funding model of schools under USE. Because of the limited funding of the USE program, education managers are compelled to levy extra fees in order to cater for other school expenses such as lunch, utility expenses, among others. The relationship between USE funding and extra charges was found to be very significant by the correlation at 0.01level. The study revealed that On the other hand, school Administrators expressed that there is a negative attitude among parents towards making a supplementary contribution/extra fees in order to compliment Government's contribution since parents have been informed that the Government entirely funds the education of their children. In this respect, this same attitude has also affected the parent's value for education of their children since their involvement in terms of financial support is limited.

Extra charges help schools to cater for where the government's provision is inadequate. These charges facilitate the smooth running of the school.

Key informant interview 1:

Yes Government should encourage parents to pay the extra fees since it does not provide all that is needed for the learners such as midday meals and accommodation for teachers. Teachers who are paid and posted by the government are few and therefore parents need to pay extra charges to enable the employment of private teachers, thus bridging this gap.

Figure 5.

	School	Student population	Teaching staff	On pay-roll	On PTA	Non-teaching staff	On Pay roll	On PTA
1	**Buwambo S.S**	2074	56	35	21	20	4	24
2	**Kitende S.S**	2411	99	69	30	0	0	0
3	**Nsanji S.S**	1886	58	50	8	26	0	26

***Key informant interview 2** figure 5 contains total number of the students population against the number of their teaching staff on government payroll and those that are paid by the PTA source on a private arrangement for Buwambo Seed, Kitende SS and Nsangi SS, the table is designed to potrary that a sizeable number of teachers reckoning to 40% are paid privately.*

These findings are in agreement with Mwesigwa(2022), who opined that the Church and all key stakeholders have taken the notion of commitment to new levels since the overwhelming majority of learners in the school walk barefoot, carry packed lunch, study from dilapidated buildings and parents can only manage a top up fee of only 15,000sh a term per child!"

The inferences of this study showed that the welfare needs requirements for both teachers and learners are vital. In the cases where the welfare of both staff and learners are not given due attention, it leads to poor concentration, absenteeism of teachers and learners, late coming/reporting to the school, insubordination.

The Government has completely been unsuccessful in adequately funding the schools, leaving them unable to meet the substantial welfare needs and requirements of their students, with rising inflation.

It should be observed that despite of other factors especially in the implementation of the program, the Government's primary objectives which was to increase accessibility of secondary education especially after UPE introduction in 1997 was achieved as confirmed by world report (2018) which indicated secondary enrolment grew from 954,000 in 2007 to 1.5 Million by 2016. The statistical data further pointed out funding as the most eminent cause for extra charges in schools. The numerical data as shown in the correlation figure 1 showed that stakeholders rejected the notion that government provides enough funds for schools.

The Pearson correlation at -660 implied that Government's allocation of funds per child is very minimal hence exposing the schools to expenses that they should meet using other sources for example; utilities (water and electricity), lunch, teacher accommodation, private teacher salaries, etc. The overall statistical correlation data of figure 2 revealed that the relationship between funding (independent variable) and extra charges(dependable variable) is significant at the $0<0.01$ level (2 tailed) thus displaying strong evidence against the null hypothesis which stated that “there is no relationship between government funding of USE schools and the schools' extra charges. This study therefore agreed with the alternative hypothesis that inadequate funding of Church of Uganda USE schools compels them to charge extra fees from schools.

Figure 6:

		I am aware that parents contribute money to schools for children's feeding
I agree to the fact that the introduction of USE is important	Pearson Correlation	.734
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.158
	N	5
It is true that the government provides enough funding per child	Pearson Correlation	-.660
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.226
	N	5
I propose that the government should give money to parents to pay schools	Pearson Correlation	-.558
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.328
	N	5
There are other expenses incurred by the school apart from tuition	Pearson Correlation	.709
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.180
	N	5
Under funding of USE schools affects students and teacher's performance and welfare	Pearson Correlation	.740
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.153
	N	5
I am aware that there is a strict policy for the use of USE funds	Pearson Correlation	.846
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.071
	N	5
There are other demands at school not catered for by the government USE funding	Pearson Correlation	.773
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.125
	N	5

The table above indicates the results of Pearson correlation conducted to examine the relationship between government funding and extra charges charged by schools. Looking at different construes, The results indicated a significant relationship between government's funding and extra charges. The table results also imply that schools can be difficult to manage, without extra charges. This was confirmed by results of ANOVA tests as indicated below**.**

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	235.928	3	78.643	2.452	.432[b]
	Residual	32.072	1	32.072		
	Total	268.000	4			

Dependent Variable: There are other expenses incurred by the school apart from tuition. Predictors: (Constant), Head teachers charge to cater for lunch, private teachers and teacher. Accommodation, Is it true that schools' extra charges cause school dropout and absenteeism, I agree to the fact that some schools charge extra fees for non-institutional reasons.

The study showed that some students fail to complete different levels due to the extra school fees charges of different categories aforementioned. This implies that there should be a deliberate strategy either for government to increase the funding in order to meet school's demands, or to mobilize parents to know and embrace their responsibilities to contribute to the school fees.

This implied that there is a strong relationship between student's retention in schools and extra charges portrayed by the Pearson correlation at .836.

The justification for extra fees was largely due to the financial demands at schools that are not met by governments funding, hence school managers are left with no option but to request for financial support from parents and community in order to meet the pressing demands. Although this is the case, it was evident that there is need for the government to control and regulate fees payment in order to protect parents and students from exploitation to save some schools' leverage from the insufficient provision by government to make unnecessary charges

It should regulate but within the limits because there are some unreasonable managers who may take advantage and extort resources from the naive parents. They should not have unrealistic expectations e.g. Ugx300, 000 for day schools to offer reasonable services because the capitation grant is not adequate for this. The teachers who are not on pay roll are also paid with these funds. ***Key Informant Interview 3***

The study further portrayed that:

The MOES should regulate based on needs assessment which is research based and also regulate USE school fees but not barn all charges in schools.

Key Informant Interview 4

The inferences above agree to the notion that, it is imperative for government to regulate other fees collection in USE schools especially on items that do not directly affect the learning of students, for example Identity cards, admission fees, but because of the prevailing gaps in the funding of the USE program, government should not barn all fees collection for instance lunch for learners, welfare of private teachers, which this research found on the other hand to be contributory to the drop out of learners.

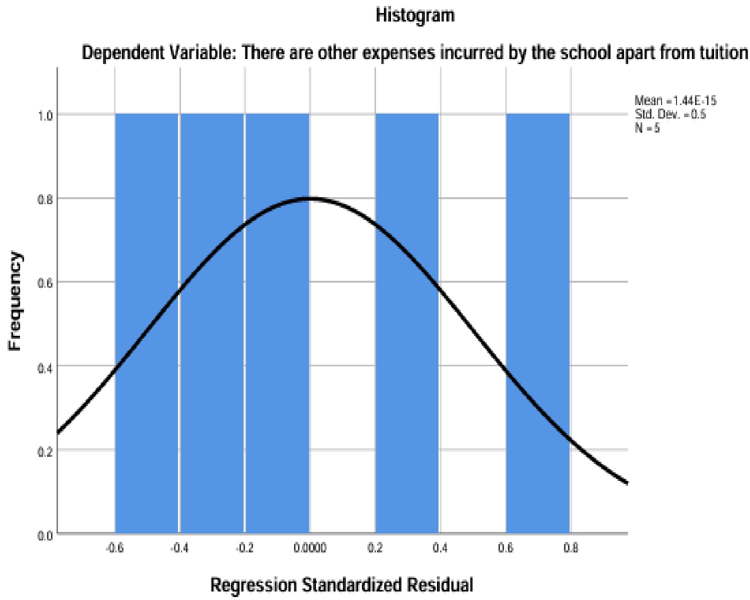
Predictors: (Constant), Head teachers charge to cater for lunch, private teachers and teacher accommodation, it is true that schools' extra charges cause schools drop out and absenteeism, I agree to the fact that some schools charge extra fees for non-institutional reasons Dependent Variable: There are other expenses incurred by the school apart from tuition.

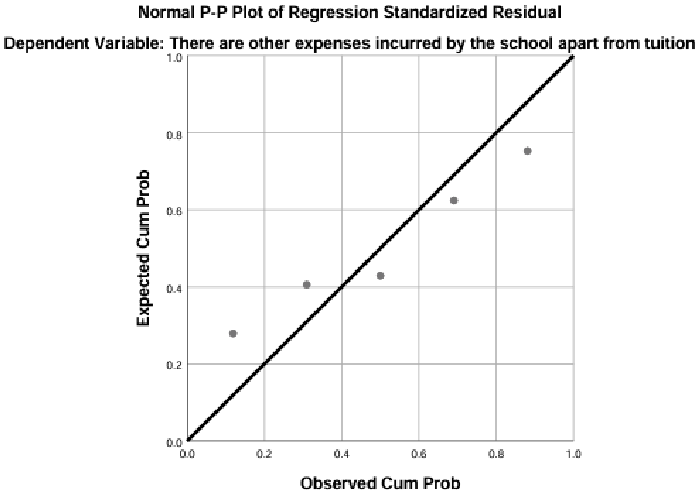
The statistical correlation data of figure above revealed that it is true that the head teachers charge extra fees from students. This extra money is used to cater for other expenses such as lunch, private teachers and teacher accommodation, utilities, and many others. The overall statistical correlation data of model summary above therefore revealed that the relationship between Head teachers charge (independent variable) and other expenses incurred by the school apart from tuition(dependable variable) is significant at the 0.983 thus displaying a strong evidence that teachers indeed charge extra for the expenses uncatered for by the government. The graphs below illustrate the difference between the observed value and the predicated value in the regression. They therefore prove that there are indeed other expenses incurred by the schools except tuition.

The chart below reveals the frequency levels as a result of other of other expenses incurred by the schools which is portrayed to be at a higher level of 0.8

Figure 7:

Charts





Scatter diagram confirming a correlation between the dependent valuable (government funding and the dependent variable (extra charges). The chart revealed that although government claims to be funding education under the USE programs, a lot of items are either met by internal sources or not met at all and since the country embraced a free economy system Private schools mount pressure on Government grant aided school for better service delivery. The implication of the above is that USE schools have to device alternative ways to supplement their government earning or collapse. It was also evident that although USE caused an overflow to government and government grant aided schools due to poor education services, some USE schools hardly attract numbers**.**

The chart also confirms that schools meet most of their other expenses using recourses obtained from extra charges hence facilitating their operations and survival just as Schreuder and Landley (2001:39) assert that schools obtain finances from three main sources; government funding, school fees and special fundraising campaigns.

These findings are in line with EMIS (2015), report which indicated that apart from the growing number of both primary and secondary schools, teachers on government pay roll have remained inadequate. For example out the 347,219 according to the government employs 266,290 at all levels of education. Primary section reckoning to 184,275 whereas secondary schools take 67,168, this implies that even government aided schools are largely depending on privately supported teachers.

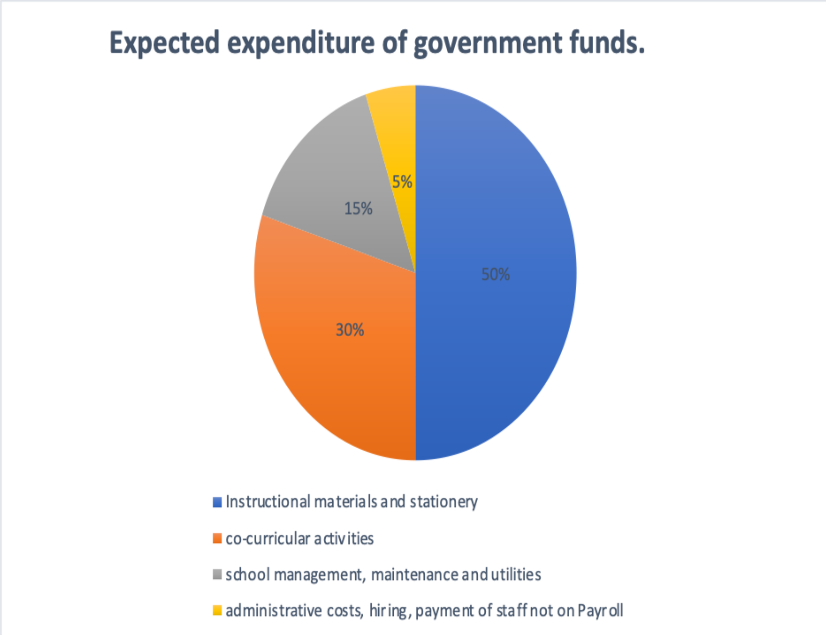
RECOMMENDATIONS.

The study recommends that the government and the Ministry of Education and Sport should disburse an adequate capitation grant to improve the management of students' learning, this calls for an increase in the money allocated to each student.

Furthermore, the study suggested that parents and education stakeholders need to ensure sufficient funding for the purchase of necessary equipment to enhance the management of students' learning. Therefore, the government should consider a strategy of mobilizing parents' involvement and contribution towards the learning of their children.

The government and the Ministry of Education and Sports work with all key stakeholders to introduce a workable fees policy in schools in order to save parents from exploitation.

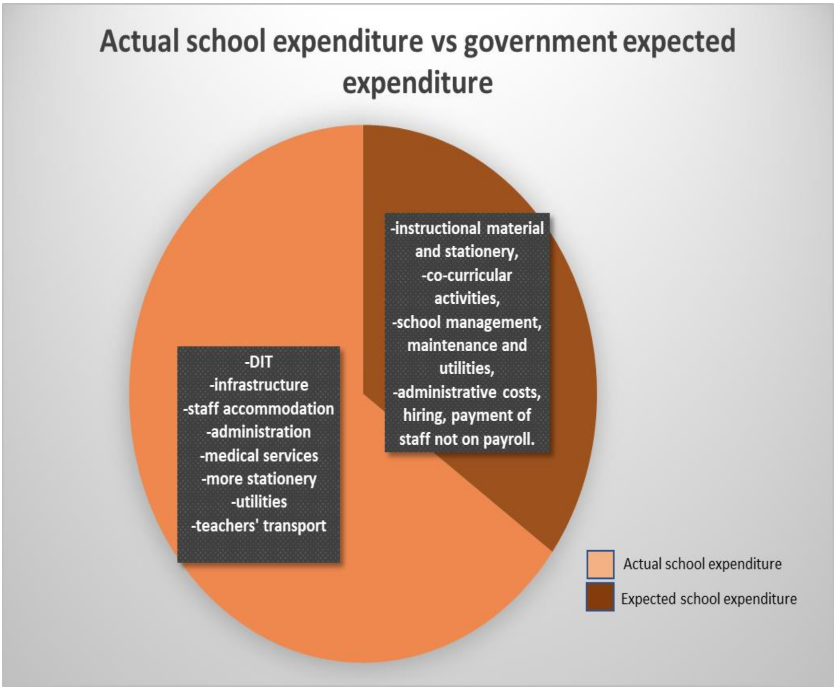
Measures to increase funding of government aided education institutions implementing USE should be considered if government is to achieve the prime objective of education accessibility for the low-income earners.



Pie chart 1 above shows expected schools expenditure in relation to the government allocation.

On average, the government allocates 52,000shs per child intended to cater *for instructional material and stationery, co-curricular activities, school management, maintenance and* utilities, administrative costs, *hiring, payment of staff not on payroll.*

Pie Chart 2



The pie chart ii above is in accordance with figure 5 interviews from the mentioned school heads, who expressed that several items key for operation of schools are actually not catered for. These items include infrastructural development, teacher's accommodation reckoned at 200,000shs, DIT among others.

The study findings therefore propose that the ideal fee that the government should allocate per child be 250,000shs to cater for these items. This also implies that in consideration of the current cost of living and school requirements, government leaves a deficit of approximately 180,000shs per child.

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