

**AKOL IRENE BIRA (2011-M092-40002)**

**Learners' Family Background and Academic Performance in Universal Primary Education Schools in Soroti Municipality, Soroti District.**

Government of Uganda has been implementing Universal Primary Education since 1997 but for a long time many parts of the country have experienced low levels of achievement in UPE. The study was conducted in Soroti Municipality, Soroti district, with the objectives of assessing the influence of economic status of learners' parents; education level of learners' parents; marital status of learners' parents and parents' relationship with the learners on academic performance in UPE schools in Soroti Municipality. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection including review of existing literature, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and observation. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and the qualitative data were analysed by classifying into themes. Coding was then done to be able to come up with dominant views from the respondents. The findings revealed that economic status of learners' parents explains up to 1.9%, education level of learners' parents accounts for 0.8%, marital status of learners' parents accounts for 12.5% and parents' relationship with the learners accounted for up to 7.6% of academic performance in Soroti Municipality UPE schools. Furthermore, 77.2% of academic performance remains unaccounted for in this study, implying that there are other factors that account for academic performance that need investigation. The immediate factor to study is the effect of the learner characteristics on academic performance. The researcher concluded that education level and economic status of learners' parents are less significant while marital status of learners' parents and parents' relationship with the learners are more significant in determining learners' academic performance. To improve academic performance: Parents should uphold their role of supporting learners' education; increased community sensitisation; increased parents' engagement in policy formulation; guidance and counselling of both parents and learners; and provision of education scholarships to the poor. Key areas for future research include: contribution of learner characteristics to academic performance; contribution of mid-day meals to the academic performance and in-depth and comparative studies looking at learner characteristics, teacher-based factors and parent-based factors in influencing academic performance. Once these are done, it is probable that the academic performance will improve in the area.

**Key Words: Learners, Family Background, Academic Performance, Universal Primary Education Schools, Soroti District**