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The Role of Stakeholders in Enhancing Retention of Pupils in Universal Primary Education Schools: A Comparative Study of Selected Urban and Rural Schools in Kitgum District.

The purpose of the study was to establish the roles of stakeholders in improving retention in urban and rural Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Kitgum district. The specific objectives were; to find out specific activities stakeholders do which have impact on retention of pupils in urban and rural UPE schools, to investigate factors which hinder effective participation of stakeholders in improving retention in UPE schools in Kitgum district and finally to establish the school's initiatives that can have positive impacts on retention of learners in urban and rural UPE schools. The study was basically qualitative involving exploration of various views given by pupils, teachers, head teachers, District Education Officer, SMC and Parents Teachers Associations, and community members as the main study respondents. Data was collected using interview guides for key informants and focus group discussion for each category of respondents. The findings revealed that activities done by stakeholders which have impact on retention of pupils included payment of school dues, attending school meetings, guidance and counselling, support with homework, provision of food and scholastic materials. While actions that had a negative impact on retention included early marriage, lack of supervision, and teacher absenteeism. Factors inhibiting participation of stakeholders in improving retention in UPE schools in Kitgum district included ignorance of stakeholders, poverty, location of schools, distance from home to school, lack of scholastic materials, and poor guidance of learners among others. Initiatives that can have positive impact on retention of learners in urban and rural in UPE schools include sensitisation of learners, provision of food, provision of scholastic materials, uniform food and other requirements. It was recommended that to improve retention of pupils in primary schools in Kitgum district, the government should release UPE funding on time, parents should pay pupils' uniforms, shoes, and scholastic materials like mathematical sets among others. Teachers should be more strictly supervised in areas of absenteeism and corporal punishments by school head teachers; Schools, parents and the community to work together to help the girl children by counselling them not to engage in premarital sex. Furthermore, it was concluded that the various social, political, economic problems have led to major challenges in improving retention in UPE schools in Kitgum, stakeholders have contributed significantly to the problem of retention and schools do not have enough initiatives to entice children to stay in school.

Key Words: Stakeholders, Retention, Pupils, Universal Primary Education Schools, Kitgum District