



GRADUATE SCHOOL
ISTANBUL MEDENIYET UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

**Strategic Leadership in Educational Institutions in Uganda:
A Comparative Analysis of Effective Management
Models in Uganda**

Master's Thesis

Yusuf Mugoya

June 2024



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Supervisor

Prof. Dr. İbrahim Hakan Karataş

June 2024

THESIS JURY APPROVAL

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STATEMENTS

Style and Reference Manual Statement

Having reviewed this thesis written under my supervision, I confirm that it has been written in accordance with APA (7th Edition) Manual of Style and used its [footnote/in text] reference format consistently throughout the entire text.

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that all information in this dissertation has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conducts, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Signature

Yusuf Mugoya

ÖZET

Uganda'daki Eğitim Kurumlarında Stratejik Liderlik: Uganda'daki Etkili Yönetim Modellerinin Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analizi

Mugoya, Yusuf

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Eğitim Kurumları İşletmeciliği Anabilim Dalı

Danışman: Prof. Dr. İbrahim Hakan Karataş

Haziran 2024

Bu çalışma, Uganda'daki ilkokul ve ortaokullarda eğitim kalitesini artırmada stratejik liderliğin rolünü incelemektedir. Uganda hükümeti, öğretmen maaşlarını artırma ve "tohum okulları" kurma gibi çeşitli çabalar göstermiş olsa da, ulusal sınavlar olan PLE, UCE ve UACE'deki yüksek başarısızlık oranları, birçok eğitim kurumunda sonuçların beklentilerin altında kaldığını göstermektedir. Araştırma, yüksek okulu bırakma oranları, düşük mezuniyet oranları, zayıf altyapı ve yetersiz stratejik liderlik eğitimi gibi sorunları, Uganda'daki eğitim başarısının önündeki temel engeller olarak tanımlamaktadır.

Stratejik liderlik teorisine dayanan bu çalışma, üst düzey liderlerin etkili strateji uygulamasını önemli ölçüde etkilediğini varsaymaktadır. Bu bağlamda, vizyon belirleme, karar alma ve ekip çalışması gibi stratejik liderlik unsurlarının akademik performansı nasıl etkilediğini araştırmaktadır. Araştırma, Uganda'nın beş bölgesindeki devlet ve özel okullardan 10 katılımcı (6 müdür ve 4 müdür yardımcısı) ile yapılan görüşmeleri de içeren nitel araştırma yöntemleriyle, stratejik liderlik ile akademik başarı arasındaki bağlantıyı incelemektedir.

Bulgular, okul liderlerinin kullandığı stratejik liderlik tarzlarının öğrencilerin akademik performansını doğrudan etkilediğini göstermektedir. İş birliği, bilinçli karar alma ve net vizyon belirleme ile karakterize edilen stratejik liderlik sergileyen okul yöneticileri, akademik mükemmeliyeti ve öğrencilerin bütünsel gelişimini teşvik eden uygun öğrenme ortamları oluşturmaktadır.

Çalışma, Uganda'daki eğitim kalitesinin iyileştirilmesinin büyük ölçüde okul yöneticilerinin stratejik liderlik unsurlarını uygulamalarına bağlı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Araştırma, Uganda'daki eğitim kurumlarındaki belirli ihtiyaçları ele almayı ve genel eğitim sonuçlarını iyileştirmeyi amaçlayan istekli yöneticiler için bir profesyonel gelişim modeli geliştirilmesine katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Stratejik Liderlik, Okul Yönetimi, Akademik Performans, Vizyon Belirleme, Uganda

ABSTRACT

Strategic Leadership in Educational Institutions in Uganda: A Comparative Analysis of Effective Management Models in Uganda

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Master's Thesis, Department of Educational Administration

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. İbrahim Hakan Karataş

June 2024

This study examines the role of strategic leadership in enhancing educational quality in Ugandan primary and secondary schools. Despite efforts by the Ugandan government, such as increasing teachers' salaries and establishing seed schools, educational outcomes in many institutions remain below expectations, as evidenced by high failure rates in national exams like PLE, UCE and UACE. The research identifies challenges including high dropout rates, low completion rates, poor infrastructure, and inadequate strategic leadership training as key obstacles to educational achievement in Uganda.

Guided by strategic leadership theory, which posits that top leaders significantly influence effective strategy implementation, this study explores how strategic leadership elements like vision-setting, decision-making, and teamwork impact academic performance. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews with 10 participants (6 headmasters and 4 directors) from government and private schools across Uganda's five regions, the study investigates the connection between strategic leadership and academic success.

The findings reveal that strategic leadership styles employed by school leaders directly influence students' academic performance. School administrators who engage in strategic leadership, characterized by collaboration, informed decision-making, and clear vision-setting, create conducive learning environments that promote academic excellence and holistic student development.

The study concludes that the improvement of education quality in Uganda is heavily reliant on the application of strategic leadership elements by school administrators. The research contributes to the development of a professional development model for aspiring administrators, aimed at addressing specific needs in Ugandan educational institutions and improving overall educational outcomes.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, School Management, Academic Performance, Vision-Setting, Uganda

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESSP-Education Sector Strategic Plan

TISSA- Teacher Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa

PLE-Primary Leaving Examination

UCE -Uganda Certificate of Education

UACE -Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education

EFA-Education For All

UPE-Universal Primary Education

MoES-Ministry of Education and Sport

PPET-Post Primary Education and Training

USE-Universal Secondary Education

UNEB Uganda National Examination Board

MDG-Millennium Development Goals

PTA-Parent Teachers' Association

TDMS-Teacher development and management system

ICT- Information and Communication Technology

DIT-Directorate of Industrial Training.

TDK -Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu)

PLEB-Primary Leaving Examination Board

NGOs-Non Government Organisations

SCL- Student-Centered Learning

SIPs -School Improvement Projects

ITI- Integration of Technology Initiative

ECD- Early Childhood Development

AKES-The Aga Khan Education Service

KGF- Kasese Girls' Foundation

PLCs- Professional Learning Communities

SEL- Social Emotional Learning

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Globally speaking, the most important tactic for the advancement of society in the developing countries is still education. Numerous studies on the development of human capital agree that a country's human resources, not its money or natural resources, ultimately decide how quickly its economy and society develop. The primary, secondary, and university education system is the main institutional mechanism for generating human capital (Nsubuga, 2008).

Ugandan education is liberalised, therefore there are both private and public educators. The public sector is the segment of the economy that provides essential government functions. The public sector provides services that benefit all members of society, not just the individual who uses them (for example, public education). In the Ugandan setting, an effective, motivated, and well-trained civil service is expected to be one of the country's primary pillars. According to reports on employee performance in Uganda, performance falls below expectations (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024).

Uganda is undergoing significant development, with the goal of transitioning from a peasant community to a modern and rich nation by 2040. Education is seen as an essential component in achieving national development goals. Uganda's education policy are based on the government's 1992 Education White Paper and the 2004 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). The White Paper on Education serves as the framework for the country's educational organisation, policy, and programming. While there have been some changes made to its principles, the White Paper still directs the sector in promoting citizenship; moral, ethical, and spiritual values; scientific, technical, and cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes; literacy, which provides individuals with fundamental knowledge; and, in

general, enabling Ugandans to help develop a self-sustaining national economy (TISSA, 2013).

Since the colonial era, Uganda's educational system has undergone several modifications. Following her 1962 independence from Great Britain, numerous commissions and committees were established to examine the educational system, and suggestions were periodically made to guarantee the accomplishment of educational objectives. The way Uganda's education system is being implemented has been significantly impacted by the application of these recommendations (Asad, 2021).

Education is the most important strategy for societal development in underdeveloped countries worldwide (Nsubuga, 2008). Education is an investment so there is a significant positive correlation between education and economic-social productivity. Education empowers individuals to pursue productive endeavours and better their livelihoods, leading to higher living standards. Education not only provides knowledge and skills for economic and social transformation, but also instills values, attitudes, and aspirations that promote natural development. Education improves labor skills, leading to higher wages and more opportunities for productive employment (Bett. W & Bett. S, 2021). This could help inhabitants of any nation realize their full potential. Uganda's education system includes both academic and technical training at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Formal primary schooling in Uganda comprises seven years, typically referred to as P1 through to P7. The official age range for primary schooling is 6 to 12 years. At the end of primary school, a national examination, the Primary School Leaving Examination (PLE), is administered (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006).

Secondary schooling consists of two levels: ordinary secondary (four classes) and advanced secondary (two classes), with the official secondary school age range covering 13 to 18 year olds. Successful completion of ordinary secondary education leads to the award of the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) or “O” level and successful completion of advanced secondary leads to the award of the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) or “A” level (Nsubuga, 2008).

Tertiary education includes universities, colleges of commerce, technical colleges, and teachers’ colleges. Both universities and colleges of commerce require the UACE as a basic entry qualification. Technical and vocational colleges train craftsmen, technicians and other skilled workers for industry. These colleges include an intermediate level for students who have completed primary schooling and an advanced level for students who have completed “O” level. Students studying to become primary school teachers enrol in teachers’ colleges after “O” level, whereas students studying to become secondary school teachers must complete “A” level before starting their training. In addition to the formal system, a non-formal education system operates to serve disadvantaged children and young people (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006).

Education has evolved throughout history to accommodate the needs of the learners it serves. Many industrialized countries had tried to bridge the large difference in education standards and performance. In the 1990s, numerous countries pushed hard for primary education reforms, particularly Education For All (Adimola, 2014).

In Africa, countries like Lesotho, Malawi, Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda took the initiative and abolished the burden of tuition (fees) from the parents and provided for free primary education for all school-age children in government-administered institutions. In 1997,

Uganda's government implemented Universal Primary Education (UPE) to help the country reach the EFA goals. The Ugandan government's actions brought everyone, affluent or poor, to the same level and improved the overall quality of primary education (Adimola, 2014).

The Ugandan constitution was adopted in 1995, with a strong emphasis on the development of free and basic education for all. In this respect, a number of private institutions grew up alongside the government institutions, with a difference in payments in the private sector and some little contributions, especially in the town schools, which are government-owned (MoES 2006).

The free Universal Primary Education (UPE) program has led to greater enrollment in primary schools and increased competition for high school admissions. The Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) manages secondary education, while local district administrations handle primary education. Since regaining stability in its administration, Uganda has continuously improved its educational system (Nsubuga, 2008). Uganda's government created a new policy on Post Primary Education and Training (PPET) before implementing Universal Secondary Education (USE) to address increased demand and improve access to secondary education (MoES, 2006).

In addition to promoting fair access, the objective is to raise the standard and effectiveness of both primary and secondary school administration. New management strategies will be needed for widespread participation. Effective leadership may be necessary for these policy adjustments to help the government fulfill its goal of providing access to high-quality education (Nsubuga, 2008).

Some academics note that there are too many difficulties and conundrums in management and leadership, which makes them too complicated. Both internal and external issues might present difficulties and problems for the administrators and staff of these schools. The internal conundrums mentioned include those pertaining to task structures, hierarchy, personal and organisational goals, and professionalism the conundrum of entangling professionals in both bureaucratic and participatory decision-making processes (Ssekiziyivu, 2009). Other researchers notice that the principal is an administrator, manager, and leader, but he or she cannot be entirely autonomous because he or she is a member of and must be receptive to an organisational hierarchy (Ssekiziyivu, 2009). Regardless of the issues and obstacles mentioned above, the school must continue to operate, and it is the responsibility of the head teacher/principal to guarantee that it does.

Strategic leadership is the way organizational executives impact their organizational performance through their leadership. Strategic leaders shape the formation of strategic intent and strategic mission and influences successful strategic actions for the formulation of strategies and implementation of strategies which yields strategic competitiveness above average returns.

Executives that use strategic leadership to influence the success of their organisations are known as strategic leaders. In addition to influencing effective strategic actions for the development and application of strategies that produce strategic competitiveness above average returns, strategic leaders also define the strategic intent and objective (Kitonga, Bichanga & Muema, 2016).

This chapter includes the historical background, theoretical background, conceptual perspectives, contextual perspectives, problem statement, study purpose, study

objectives, research questions, study hypothesis, conceptual framework, study scope, study significance, and study justification.

1.1 Background to the Study

1.1.1 Historical Background

Many institutions and organizations of various types and orientations (both commercial and non-profit) exist and succeed in a competitive economy because of the quality of their leaders. In terms of timely decision-making, resource allocation, and staffing decisions, leaders set the direction and deliver excellence. Organization management personnel are in charge of providing stewardship and strategic leadership. Strategic leadership is unquestionably important in achieving success in any human effort. Lussier and Achua (2007) described strategic leadership as a person's ability to participate, imagine, preserve flexibility, think strategically, and collaborate with others to make changes that will produce a viable future for the organisation. In order to effectively lead an organization, strategic managers must keep an eye on both the internal and external environments, develop the company's resources and capabilities, keep tabs on market and industry trends, recognize business threats, and create a compelling future vision for their team (Wheelen & Hunger, 2011).

Research on the difficulties of strategic leadership in schools by Harray (2008) revealed that the position of the school head has changed in some nations, such as New Zealand, as a result of national education reforms. The research further pointed out that a number of changes made to New Zealand's educational system resulted in the introduction of market-based teaching methods, which had a big impact on the formulation of educational

policy. Following the modifications, principals were no longer viewed as curriculum leaders but rather as the chief executive officers of their respective schools.

Furthermore, Makgone (2012), in a study on strategic leadership and academic achievement in Namibia, emphasized the importance of leadership in Namibian schools. In this study, strategic leadership included discipline management, resource mobilization, stakeholder management, and plan implementation. According to the study, strategic leadership is critical in ensuring that schools have adequate resources, effective teaching, and discipline management, all of which contribute to increased academic performance.

1.1.2 Theoretical Background

This research will be guided by strategic leadership theory, which states that top leadership makes and influences strategic decisions that have a substantial impact on effective strategy implementation. According to this notion, strategic leaders must gain awareness and expertise, think outside the box, and be able to connect and produce ideas. The notion states that strategic leadership is the ability of someone to anticipate, create a vision, keep flexibility, think strategically, and collaborate with others to initiate a change that can bring a better future to the organization (Lear, 2012, Ogola, 2019).

According to research, there has been a decline in understudy academic performance in Uganda, despite a consistent increase in the number of understudies (Nsubuga, 2008). This is funded by poor teacher motivation and ongoing government assistance in persuading teachers to work at several schools. Helper schools must prolong periods of indifference, which affects the notion that preparation leads to schools.

According to Katamei and Omwono (2015), many private schools do not meet functional exhibition requirements due to lack of resources, vulnerable workspaces, or, most importantly, ineffective administration. Due to the dissatisfaction of the understudies, understudies' performances have frequently served as the main topic of controversy in countries like Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda as well.

According to Simiyu (2013), applying initiative methods essentially enhances understudies' scholarly exhibition. It also demonstrates how exceptional academic achievement may be sparked by having a well-stocked library, core course materials, teachers who are well-prepared, and large homerooms. Onyara (2013) reported that the poor performance of understudies was caused by lack of learning resources and offices as well as a lackluster supervision of the learning activities. To address this risk, this study will ascertain the extent to which strategic leadership techniques influence the performance of students.

Leadership techniques play an important role in twenty-first-century groups. This is due to irregular ecological changes across many schools (Deeboonmee & Ariratana, 2014). According to Deeboonmee and Ariratana (2014), scholars have defined strategic leadership practice as the ability of a trailblazer to foresee, anticipate, think strategically, enhance adaptability, and collaborate with followers to bring about changes that result in a believable future for associations and schools. A strategic trailblazer can influence followers to achieve the best presumptions. In this sense, leadership is the ability to carry out commands and work toward a goal (Omari and Kavali, 2016). Good leadership is essential to the efficient operation of schools, just as it is to the association.

According to Kilonzi (2009), school principals should perform three critical functions: deciding and shaping the advancement of objectives and strategies; forming and organizing instructional associations responsible for planning and carrying out outfitting projects; and obtaining and managing the assets required to support the instructional framework and its planned projects. Furthermore, detailed examinations of strategic leadership practice reveal that such practices include determining strategic direction, developing and maintaining outstanding center capabilities, enhancing human resources, bolstering a thriving authoritative culture, asserting moral practices, and establishing adjusted strategic controls (Jooste and Fourie, 2010).

1.1.3 Conceptual Background

A school that has high expectations for student achievement, an organized learning environment, a systematic method of assessing students' progress, and consultation with a variety of institutional stakeholders can only exist because of the strategic leadership's crucial role in the strategy's execution.

For the school to function academically well, the strategic leadership must be able to establish an atmosphere that supports the implementation of the plan. A suitable atmosphere includes, among other things, a school community that is supportive, a teaching fraternity that is driven, and a free from incidences of student indiscipline (Leithwood et al. (2008).

The ability of the school administration to form a collaborative team is critical to the implementation of various initiatives that the administration desires to pursue. During the implementation phase, management must explain and foster employee ownership of the strategy while also addressing any emergent challenges (Stanley, 2015). In order to drive

ownership, Kasekende (2013) claimed that top management at a given institution must form coalitions and urge department heads and teachers to adopt the strategic plan.

The strategic leader's capacity to manage stakeholders has a significant impact on academic performance. The term stakeholders refers to persons who have the ability to affect or be influenced by a company's operations (Feng, 2013). In the context of school stakeholders included parents, teachers, students, and the school community. D'Amato, Henderson, and Florence (2009) define stakeholder management as the consideration of stakeholders' interests in decision-making aspects inside an organization.

Within the framework of an educational system, stakeholder management refers to the process of incorporating the interests of the school community, non-teaching staff, parents, teachers, and students into the decision-making process that goes into running the school. The management of teachers' conduct and desire to complete their teaching assignments depends heavily on strategic leadership. Students' academic performance is impacted by the teachers' regular attendance in class. This is due to the fact that it lengthens the amount of time that teachers and students spend together in class, which improves learning (Fallis, 2013).

However, due to agency problems, teachers may not always be present in class. The term "agency problems" refers to conflicts of interest between school administration and teachers. Some professors may miss sessions to pursue personal hobbies, such as part-time teaching in different locations or running a side business. Strategic leadership guarantees that teachers are monitored in terms of class attendance in schools and minimizes opportunities for self-interest that does not benefit the school (Munir & Khalil, 2016).

Second, while strategy is frequently associated with planning in traditional definitions (Fidler, 1996), it may be better viewed as a perspective, or a comprehensive method of looking at things. Third, the strategy is concerned with the organization's broad, significant dimensions rather than its detailed day-to-day tasks. Fourth, while contemplating strategy, it is appropriate to use a medium to longer-term time frame. Finally, strategy can serve as a framework for shorter-term planning and activity.

Strategic leadership is the ability of a manager to articulate a strategic vision for the company or a division of the company and to inspire and influence others to share that vision. Another way to think of strategic leadership is as employing strategy in personnel management. It has the capacity to implement organizational change and to sway members of the organization. Resource allocation, organizational structure creation, and strategic vision expression are all done by strategic leaders. Organizations and events outside of their own have an impact on and influence the difficult challenges that strategic leaders work on in an unclear environment (Madu, Abbo & Salisu, 2023).

The primary goal of strategic leadership is to foster an atmosphere in which employees anticipate the organization's demands in the context of their tasks. Strategic leaders inspire employees in an organization to implement their ideas. Strategic leaders utilize reward and incentive systems to promote productive and quality personnel and to improve school performance (Bett.W & Bett.S, 2021).

1.1.4 Contextual Background

The study will focus on strategic leadership in selected primary and secondary schools in Uganda. The study will be conducted in chosen primary and secondary schools in Uganda's rural communities. According to the Ministry of Education and Sports, pupils

in places such as Ntungamo continue to perform significantly below expectations in secondary school (MoES 2022).

It was discovered that these pupils' participation in learning was inadequate, with many students receiving bad results on the major examinations, namely UCE and UACE. For example, in prior years, UCE failure rates were 25% in 2021, but in 2022, they were 29%. If this situation persists, the national aim of reducing illiteracy and achieving national change will fail (MoES 2022, UNEB, 2023).

It also implies that the national aim of preventing poverty, sickness, and other social issues will not be met. However, no scientific study has profited from the strategic leadership concepts examined in this study and how they connect to students' academic achievement, as this current study will.

According to Sushila's (2004) study, head teachers in top schools are supposed to serve as change agents, wagon masters, and connecting points. Therefore, a dynamic, transforming, and communicative head teacher is essential to integrative education, as they will be the center of many activities inside the school. They are supposed to oversee the everyday operations of the school's academic, financial, and administrative departments.

In light of this, Yukl (2006) views a leader who can effectively influence others as having strong interpersonal relationships, being moral, encouraging, likeable, competent, and trustworthy. As a result, the head teacher makes decisions, removes barriers, and solves problems. In addition to using collaboration with peers as a working strategy to give students a solid foundation in holistic education, these qualified and competent professionals are also expected to advocate on behalf of the school before the Ministry

and the local communities to guarantee that the laboratories and libraries are adequately stocked and equipped.

The goal is to gather extensive teaching resources that can guarantee a curriculum that is integrated. The anticipated result is experiential learning with life skills that need a setting with a strong teacher-parent bond to ensure an engaging curriculum and pertinent subject matter for the successful implementation of integrated education. (Drake, S. M., & Burns, R. C., 2004).

1.2 Problem of the Study

The Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB 2011) states that education is a fundamental right for all Ugandan citizens. It is critical for the country to provide quality and relevant education to all its residents, irrespective of cultural, gender, regional, or social inequalities (René Vermeulen, 2013).

However, some obstacles are identified in terms of overall educational achievement. In Uganda, among these challenges are the high level of school dropout, much repetition by pupils, low completion rates and high pupil/teacher ratios, lack of or limited resources, resistance to change, inadequate training and support for strategic leaders, poor infrastructure, and limited access to quality education (Nsubuga, 2008).

Strategic leadership in some educational institutions in Uganda has not been taken as a serious matter which has led to poor academic goals. In line with this, Government of the Republic of Uganda has come up with strategies like increasing teachers' salaries and establishing seed schools among others (MoES, 2020). However, according to several reports like MoES and Sports (2022), Ntugamo Education Report (2022), students'

performance in secondary schools was identified as still far below the expected levels. It was revealed that the participation of these students in learning was low, with many students registering poor grades in the various examinations that is, UCE and UACE. For instance in the previous years the failure rates in UCE were at 25% in 2021 while in 2022, the failure rates were recorded at 29%. However, no scientific study had benefited from strategic leadership concepts considered in this study and how they relate with students' academic performance which this current study will do (UNEB, 2023).

To improve efficiency and effectiveness in mass education at the primary and secondary levels, new leadership techniques may be required (Nsubuga 2008). Scholars should explore the role of strategic leadership in organisations and educational institutions, particularly in developing nations such as Uganda. Strategic leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes long-term company goals and objectives through strategy development, implementation, and visioning. Strategic leadership in some Ugandan educational institutions is not taken seriously, resulting in low academic outcomes (MOES, 2022).

In many nations, organisations and educational institutions provide a wide range of services to society that governments cannot (Kitonga, Bichanga & Muema, 2016). However, because many of these organisations and educational institutions have little resources, they encounter complicated settings that necessitate innovative forms of leadership. Any evidence of weak leadership in organisations and educational institutions suggests that many individuals will be deprived of services that might improve effective performance. This highlights the significance of strategic leadership in educational institutions and organisations.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the difficulties in ensuring quality education, methods and strategies used to improve education quality, contribution of community engagement to the academic success of students, the impact of effective leadership to the overall ability of schools to deliver quality education and strategic leadership factors such as vision-setting, decision-making among others used by leaders of secondary and primary schools in Uganda by analysing and investigating the function of strategic leadership in improving educational quality in Ugandan educational institutions using effective management models. The work will also develop a professional development model for aspiring administrators and managers as strategic leaders in Uganda that will help them in improving education and addressing specific needs in Ugandan educational institutions, and to identify the key challenges facing the educational institutions.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to explore the relationship between strategic leadership and the academic performance of secondary and primary schools in Uganda.

- i) To identify the difficulties and challenges faced by schools in ensuring quality education in secondary and primary schools in Uganda.
- ii) To identify the methods and strategies used to improve education quality in primary and secondary schools in Uganda.
- iii) To examine the contribution of community engagement to the academic success of students in primary and secondary schools in Uganda.

- iv) To analyse the impact of effective leadership to the overall ability of schools to deliver quality education
- v) To identify the strategic leadership methods, factors and approaches used by school leaders to enhance quality education and academic performance in primary and secondary schools in Uganda.

1.5 Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- i) What are the main challenges faced by school leaders in ensuring the delivery of quality education in Ugandan primary and secondary schools?
- ii) What approaches and tactics do school leaders employ to enhance the quality of education and academic performance in primary and secondary schools across Uganda?
- iii) How does the engagement of school leaders in community involvement contribute to the academic achievements of primary and secondary schools in Uganda?
- iv) What is the influence of effective leadership on the capacity of primary and secondary schools in Uganda to provide quality education?
- v) How do specific strategic leadership factors, such as vision-setting, decision-making, and collaboration, impact school leaders' ability to enhance the quality of education and academic performance in primary and secondary schools in Uganda?

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Geographical Scope

The study's geographical scope will include selected secondary and primary schools in five regions of Uganda thus North, East, West, Central and Southern region. Ntugamo District is one of the districts that make up modern-day western Uganda. The coordinates on the Uganda map are 300.15'60.00E and 0052'59.99N. It is bordered by Isingiro District to the east, the Republic of Rwanda to the south, Rukiga and Rukungiri Districts to the southwest, and Rukungiri District to the northwest. Finally, it is bordered by Mitooma, Sheema, and Rwampara Districts in the north. This district was chosen for the study because student performance was under question (MoES and Sports, 2022).

The district was chosen because the researcher could access easily and more so because of the wanting performance of the district in academic. According to several reports like MoES and Sports (2022), Ntugamo Education Report (2022), students' performance in primary and secondary schools was identified as still far below the expected levels. It was revealed that the participation of these students in learning was low, with many students registering poor grades in the various examinations.

1.6.2 Content Scope

The study's content scope will include strategic leadership, which will be conceived as community engagement, and schools' ability to achieve quality academic performance. The second component will be strategic leadership and its implications for providing quality education in Uganda's secondary and primary school systems. These are expected to have a direct positive impact on students' academic performance in the sense that when

there is effective strategic leadership in the aforementioned areas, students' attendance, involvement in learning, and grades improve, and the opposite is true.

1.6.3 Time Scope

The study time scope will be the period between 2020 to 2024 as this is the period when the problem of low academic performance of students was identified.

1.7 The Justification of the study

The basis for selecting students' academic achievement is because previous reports suggested low academic performance. A number of studies were conducted on the performance of primary and secondary school principals, head teachers, and their teachers. There has been little interest in researching how strategic leadership is applied by head teachers to contribute critically to the performance of learners, particularly in Ntungamo District, and more specifically the roles played by head teachers in academic performance that will satisfy parents and other stakeholders.

1.8 The Significance of the study

The study's findings will be significant for the following groups of people. School principals of both primary and secondary schools, as well as policymakers in the Ntungamo Education Department and the Ugandan government, will understand how strategic leadership affects academic performance in secondary and primary schools, allowing them to devise strategies to improve on the strategic leadership aspects studied. The study's findings will benefit stakeholders in Ntungamo District schools by improving strategic leadership in secondary and primary schools in order to increase student academic achievement. The findings will assist the researcher understand how strategic

leadership affects students' academic achievement. This, in turn, will aid in developing recommendations for the finest strategic leadership practices. The study's findings will assist future researchers uncover gaps in their literature reviews, allowing them to move their studies forward.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the educational challenges confronting primary and secondary education systems, leadership styles, Leadership models in education and school performance. The review tries to define and clarify terminology such as strategy, leadership, leadership styles, and strategic leadership. It will also concentrate on leadership theories and styles, with a special emphasis on styles relevant to educational institutions. The principles of strategic leadership, characteristics of a strategic leader, strategic leadership in educational institutions, and strategic leadership of school principals will all be discussed. A summary of the literature, identifying any gaps in the review and lessons gained, will be offered.

2.1. Challenges Facing the Education System and Education Quality Worldwide, education is acknowledged as a crucial public utility that supports the social, economic, and political advancement of both individuals and nations. This helps to explain why economies spend large sums of money to raise educational standards. According to UNESCO (2017), education is a human right, and it is undeniable that education helps to keep the economy competitive in global marketplaces where industrial techniques and technology are always evolving (UNESCO, 2017).

Education is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that sets the groundwork for the youth to achieve decent jobs, good health, and socioeconomic position (UN, 2015). According to the World Bank (2018), Uganda is one of the Sub-Saharan African countries that has developed and implemented education policies aimed at promoting excellent education at all levels.

Basic education for both children and adults is a right incorporated in the Republic of Uganda's constitution and provided for in numerous articles, such as Article 30, which clearly stipulates that all persons have the right to education. In 1998, the civil service was decentralized, and basic education was largely left to local governments (The Local Government Act, 1997).

2.2 Education Policies in Uganda

The Ministry of Education and Sports is in charge of creating policies and ensuring that academic standards are upheld through curriculum creation, teacher preparation, and assessments. A Cabinet Minister oversees Uganda's education system, with support from three state ministers in charge of pre-primary and primary education, secondary higher education, physical education, and sports. These are mostly political leaders tasked with carrying out the government's educational ambitions and aims. Instead of participating in the sector's daily administrative operations, they serve as thought leaders. The Permanent Secretary, who also serves as the sector's general supervisor and Chief Accounting Officer, is in charge of overseeing daily operations (TISSA, 2013).

To achieve universal education in every Ugandan home, the government launched the Universal Primary Education policy in 1997. Making basic education available to students was the goal of universal primary education, which also aimed to preserve high standards of education and do away with gaps and inequalities. It should be highlighted that, despite the government's efforts to set up classrooms large enough to accommodate the large number of students, there is still a significant problem and much work ahead of the government (TISSA, 2013).

A major factor in the rise in enrollment rates was the implementation of universal primary education in several African nations. However, this situation resulted in a teacher, school,

and educational supply shortfall. When the teacher-to-student ratio in Uganda increased from 1:40 to 1:57 in 1997, more instructors were needed, more schools had to be established, more infrastructure had to be added to the ones that already existed, and more educational materials had to be produced. This further demands increased government attention, particularly for schools that receive government grants (Asad, 2021).

2.3 Challenges in Educational Institutions

In addition, the Ugandan government abolished textbook fees, PTA dues, and primary school tuition for up to four children per family. However, the majority of public primary schools continue to levy additional fees. This is all part of Universal Primary Education. A portion of this money is reportedly utilized to pay teachers' allowances and enhance their wellbeing. But in Sub-Saharan Africa, children from wealthier households and those living in cities have more access to education than children from poorer households and those living in rural regions (TISSA, 2013).

2.3.1 High Dropout Rates

According to Asad (2021), 28% of Uganda's young (15–24 years old) did not finish their secondary school, while 57% of youth had not completed their primary education. This suggests that children from lower-income families have less access to a basic education as a result of their parents' incapacity to fulfill school needs, like making extra-curricular payment and purchasing school supplies. Therefore offering "free education" does not, then, absolve parents of any responsibility to comply with school requirements (Asad, 2021).

Asad (2021) goes on to say that inability to meet school demands, early work, long commutes, early childbearing, and low academic performance were all contributing

causes to high school dropout rates in rural areas. With this regard teenagers who drop out of school run the danger of having bad health, low-paying occupations, low socioeconomic standing, and a higher likelihood of committing crimes. One could argue that the school dropout rate is still a serious problem that requires attention (Asad, 2021).

2.3.2 Teacher Shortages (Insufficient Teacher Rates)

In addition, the Republic of Uganda's government employs the majority of primary school instructors. Despite the District Service Commission being in charge of hiring and assigning teachers for primary schools, the number of teachers assigned to these institutions has not been able to keep up with the number of students enrolled in each school, making it impossible for the schools to meet their staffing needs. As a result, the majority of public primary schools currently face staffing challenges (TISSA, 2013, Asad, 2021).

Since the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007, the recruitment and hiring of teachers to fill various vacant posts in primary and secondary schools has been insufficient to fulfill the needs of the schools. The teacher development and management system project (TDMS) was established in 1993 to improve primary school teaching and learning. It should be noted that the purpose of this project was to train more primary school teachers and conduct refresher courses for in-service teachers; yet, the project was successful in creating more grade three teachers. However, the project is no longer creating teachers, and this responsibility has been delegated to the few elementary teacher training colleges in a few districts of the whole country (Asad, 2021, TISSA, 2013).

2.3.3 Local Language Strategy

The Ugandan local language strategy was developed in 2007 and included directives to support the thematic curriculum implementation in lower primary (P1-P3). When the thematic curriculum policy was put into effect in 2008, the majority of the curriculum was taught in the students' mother tongues. To assist teachers in using local languages as a medium of instruction, teacher's resource books were created in nine local languages: Runyankore-Rukiga, Lugbarati, Ateso, Acholi, Luganda, Lusoga, Runyoro-Rutoro, Rukonjo, and Karamojong. Given the limited resources allocated to education, it is reasonable to suggest that in order for the theme curriculum strategy to work, the national curriculum development center required to provide appropriate materials and provide teachers with appropriate training in a phased manner (Asad, 2021& TISSA, 2013).

It is noteworthy that the EFA policy, which aims to promote literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values, depends heavily on the thematic curriculum strategy. But more importantly, these are not the only languages spoken in Uganda, therefore the reading materials created in the nine regional languages were insufficient for the kids. This put many schools in areas where these languages are not widely spoken at a disadvantage because lower primary instructors are required to teach their students in English most of the time. As a result, because Uganda lacks a single standard local language, the implementation of the thematic curriculum has encountered various problems, affecting the quality of education at the lower elementary level (Asad, 2021, TISSA, 2013).

2.3.4 Inadequate Infrastructure

According to the TISSA study, about 67% of students who complete primary seven enroll in lower secondary school, with the remaining 33% enrolling in vocational education or dropping out (TISSA, 2013). This research also cited poor basic infrastructure in primary

and secondary schools as a critical issue that required immediate addressing. Despite efforts by the Republic of Uganda's government to build basic infrastructure, there is still a shortage of facilities such as classrooms, staff residences, well-stocked laboratories, and libraries. Thus, the majority of the challenges raised in the TISSA Report, 2013, such as low staffing, teacher absenteeism and attrition, teaching staff salary progression, inadequate teaching facilities, and low teacher involvement in policy formulation, have not been fully addressed. This could be due to inadequate support for the education system (TISSA, 2013).

2.3.5 Gender Disparities and Long Distances to Schools

The World Bank Report (2009) states that one reason for the high dropout rates in Sub-Saharan African countries is the distance to school and the expense of attending. For example, Kenya and Uganda have high per-pupil education spending shares. Furthermore, in Uganda, females are more likely than boys to drop out of school due to underage marriage and childbearing (World Bank Report, 2009).

Asad (2021) confirms that child marriage and motherhood are the main reasons behind the gender disparity in secondary school in Africa. Living in rural locations and having wide socioeconomic status gaps make it difficult for most students in Uganda, one of the Sub-Saharan African countries, to receive education. As a result, students must travel longer distances for their education. This suggests that, particularly at the lower secondary level, access to education in Uganda is still restricted (Asad 2021).

2.3.6 Limited Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

One persistent issue in Uganda's education system is the sparse use of information and communication technology (ICT) in primary and secondary education. It has been noted

that the majority of teachers have little ability to use ICT in teaching. The Government of the Republic of Uganda, through the Ministry of Education and Sport, has undertaken efforts to provide schools with solar-powered computers in order to promote science education (TISSA, 2013).

However, the distribution of these computers is not based on the number of pupils in the schools, therefore the student-computer ratio is significantly lower than what is intended. As a result, most pupils have not received the full advantage. Furthermore, there are insufficient teaching staff for computer studies as a topic at the secondary school level. This therefore contributes to the restricted use of ICT in education and highlights the need for more teachers with ICT specialization to be hired as well as for teachers to receive training on how to use ICT to enhance teaching and learning (MOES, 2017 & Asad, 2021). Asad (2021) emphasizes that Uganda confronts the same ICT issues as most developing nations, including high bandwidth prices, poorly established ICT infrastructure, an unstable supply of electricity, and insufficient resources to service a wide range of needs.

2.3.7 Inspection Issues

One of the other main issues facing Uganda's education system, according to the Ministry of Education and Sports (2017), is the inadequate oversight and inspection of schools at all levels. This suggests that the relevant staff members, district education officers, district inspectors of schools, and head teachers do not immediately and consistently submit inspection reports.

2.3.8 Funding Issues

According to Bosco's (2017) study, one of the additional challenges facing Uganda's education system is the financial strain on secondary school administrators due to government delays in releasing funds, which puts head teachers in difficult positions to manage the institution. Teachers are forced by this situation to send pupils home with money. The majority of transactions would not settle by the deadline, making the delay in the distribution of free secondary education money a challenge for school management (Bosco, 2017).

Along with the delay in sending funds to schools, one other issue is the lack of funding due to budget cuts, which has severely impacted the majority of public schools. Reduced financing results in a reduction of staff, resources, and student services. Due to severe financial issues, many school heads are forced to oversee budgets that are not big enough to meet the expenses of the institution. Due to this, schools have suffered, teachers' workloads have increased, and in certain situations, layoffs have occurred (Bosco, 2017).

2.3.9 Examination Focus

In Uganda, passing exams has long been emphasised and prioritised in the educational system. Exam malpractice has been encouraged as a result, with students reading for the aim of improving their results and ultimately figuring out every technique to cheat exams that are given as a kind of ongoing evaluation (Samson & Allida, 2018). All students receive instruction and taught for many years thus seven for primary school, four for o-level, and two for advanced school but they are only tested for a few days at a time. This implies that the quality of their writing during those few exam days serves as a gauge of their academic proficiency. In order for their schools to be considered among the best in the nation, teachers invest a great deal of time in preparing their students for exams.

However, doing so comes at the expense of not helping pupils develop their other skills, such as moral values, life skills, and practical knowledge in a variety of fields (Samson & Allida, 2018).

2.3.10 Continuous Assessment Challenges

Samson (2018) found that the biggest obstacles to implementing continuous assessment for the students were a lack of infrastructure, large class sizes, a lack of clear manuals and instructions, and a lack of time allotted for the course. The study found that teachers' lack of knowledge and skills in administering tests, homework, examinations, oral and practical activities is a barrier to ongoing assessment administration. (Samson & Allida, 2018, P.4). Children's academic performance is improved through continuous assessment, which makes it significant. Nonetheless, Ugandan continuous assessment is not carried out as it should be. (Samson & Allida, 2018). Inadequate instructional materials and facilities were significant barriers to teaching and learning, especially when implementing continuous assessment. (Samson, Allida, 2018). If continuous assessment is strictly followed, it overworks teachers, leading some of them to fake marks or grades in students' records for examinations that were never administered. The aforementioned activities are particularly detrimental to the primary goal of continuous assessment as a whole (Samson & Allida, 2018).

2.3.11 Policy Implementation and Gaps

Plas (2007) states that educational institutions in Uganda face various challenges, including low staffing levels, poor infrastructure, lack of accurate data about labor market demands, slow regularization and appointment of staff in specialized institutions, and the revival of the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT). In addition, many institutions/schools operate illegally due to lack of license. As per Plas (2007), Uganda is

also confronted with the issue of educational resources for children with exceptional requirements, such as typewriters, books bailers, and braille books, which are costly and can only be acquired centrally in stages. One issue is that there is not enough money allocated to the many projects and activities, and the processing of monies takes longer than expected (Plas, 2007, 15).

Uganda has a large population of impoverished schoolchildren who would not be able to attend class without government assistance since they are unable to pay for their tuition. The government has been successful in expanding access to education for more residents due to changes in the way school fees are paid. Nonetheless, the school system must expand to accommodate the increasing number of students enrolled, which has an impact on both the caliber of education and the demand for more teachers (Plas, 2007, 11).

2.3.12 Poverty

The expected legal age for children to start school in Uganda is seven years old. Nevertheless, many children in the country are not able to start school for a variety of reasons, including lack of schools, illness, or needing to look after their younger siblings. Sometimes parents cannot afford to pay for their children's school fees, so these youngsters must work to pay for it themselves. This is another reason why children might not be able to start school at the appropriate age (Plas, 2007:14).

While some schools may not require students to pay school fees, they still need to pay for school supplies like uniforms and and scholastic materials like notebooks, pens, and so on. Some people may find schooling to be too costly as a result, and families with more than four children will still be responsible for paying their other children's school fees (Plas, 2007,15).

Children in pre-primary can start school as early as age three. There are excellent preschools in most urban regions. Preschools are primarily run by the private sector and are highly commercialized. The absence of regulations at this level worries the government.

Fees are frequently viewed as being expensive and exclusive. In addition to teaching strategies, facilities, and purported infractions of fundamental pedagogical principles of child psychology and development, the quality of education is wildly variable. The issue with the better schools is the intense competition for the limited spots available, which means that parents have to enrol their children practically from birth in order to guarantee them a spot in these preschools (Plas, 2007, 15).

Finances are the biggest issue affecting Uganda's primary educators. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the quality of schooling between urban and rural communities. Since many of these students drop out of school and turn to crime or other self-help activities as a means of support, it draws Ugandans to cities like a magnet and contributes to a number of urban problems. An effort is being made to solve this issue by adding more vocational training to the curricula of primary schools (Plas, 2007,15). For instance, earlier research has used single-dimension measurement techniques, concentrating on a small number of distinct administrative personal characteristics while neglecting the range of leadership roles and responsibilities that affect student achievement.

2.3.13 Inadequate Academic Qualifications and School Management Issues

According to Bosco (2017), inadequate academic qualifications and school management have led to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in Ugandan educational institutions. Effective education system administration requires specific knowledge, abilities, and

attitudes from managers. Head teachers' academic and professional qualifications are likely to impact the quality of school-based service delivery. Head teachers play a crucial role in achieving effective school changes by influencing teaching and learning practices, providing leadership for the school and community, and supporting teachers. To properly carry out their responsibilities, school administrators have to be prepared in a methodical and regular manner. Nonetheless, a lot of head teachers lack the necessary skills to deal with changes in their work environment in school administration. Training and exposure for school administrators to engage in ongoing professional activities had been critically needed in order for them to be competent (Bosco, 2017).

The requirement for professional development and central office support for secondary school managers is another issue mentioned by (Bosco 2017) in his study. He says that in order to change the school culture to one that values assessment for learning, head teachers must have assistance. In order to effectively facilitate change, the head teacher plays a crucial role in the process and needs to become knowledgeable about assessments.

2.4 Definitions and Clarification of Terms

2.4.1 Strategy

The success and performance of a company are significantly influenced by how its strategy is implemented, as strategy implementation serves as the bridge between formulation and control. This dynamic and complex process requires managers and employees to make decisions based on internal and external factors to achieve strategic objectives (Ogola, 2019). Strategy can be understood through five key concepts: direction-setting based on the institution's history and circumstances, perspective as a comprehensive way of viewing the organization, focus on broad organizational aspects

rather than day-to-day operations, medium- to long-term temporal frameworks, and the positioning of shorter-term actions within the strategy's framework (Madu, Abbo & Salisu, 2023).

The concept of strategy has evolved over time, originating from the Greek word "stratos," meaning a large group of people led by a leader (Adair, 2007), and has historically been associated with military planning (Kipkemoi, 2022). Researchers have offered various definitions of strategy, viewing it as the pattern of resource deployment to achieve objectives (Jabeen, 2017) or the art of combining political, economic, psychological, and military forces to achieve national goals (Karataş & Kellevezir, 2021). Strategy is also seen as a management tool, a participatory leadership approach, and a method for balancing internal resources against external opportunities and risks (Altinkurt, 2007). In educational institutions, strategy often refers to the implementation of strategic plans for school administration and performance improvement, with "strategic planning" becoming a prevalent term in this context (Kipkemoi, 2022). Overall, strategy is a comprehensive process involving individual cognition, social interaction, and adaptation to a demanding environment (Morrill, 2007).

2.4.2 Leadership

Leadership is widely recognized as a means of enhancing one's social, professional, and personal life. It is highly valued by corporations for the unique contributions it can bring, ultimately boosting profits. As a result, leadership studies programs are offered globally by educational institutions (Northouse, 2016). Leadership involves significant responsibility, requiring the effective use of resources and ensuring organizational cohesion and order. Despite being a well-observed phenomenon, leadership remains one

of the most complex and least understood aspects of human interaction (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015).

The Oxford Dictionary (2006) defines leadership as guiding others by example or persuasion, while for this study, it is defined as the process of motivating people to achieve specific goals, inspiring them, gaining their commitment, and directing them toward the right objectives (Nsubuga, 2008). Researchers have approached leadership from various theoretical perspectives, with some viewing it as a trait or behavior, while others focus on relationships or information processing. Leadership has been studied in diverse settings using both qualitative and quantitative methods (Northouse, 2016).

Leadership definitions vary widely, often reflecting the perspectives and interests of those defining it. Common themes include the process of influencing and guiding others toward common goals (Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2020), the ability to realize organizational objectives and initiate change (Töre & Çilek, 2021), and the maximization of collective efforts to achieve a goal (Kruse, 2013). Leadership also involves creativity, intelligence, and wisdom, with leaders needing to possess analytical, practical, and visionary skills (Kagoda, 2012).

Overall, leadership is understood as a process where one individual intentionally influences others to organize and direct relationships and activities within a group or organization (Yukl, 2020). It encompasses efforts not only to influence current activities but also to prepare the organization for future challenges. Strong leadership is essential for implementing reforms, particularly in the context of educational development (Kagoda, 2012).

2.4.3 Leadership Styles

Different leaders use various leadership styles, which are methods employed to inspire followers, and there isn't a "one size fits all" approach (Nsubuga, 2008). Leadership styles should be chosen and adapted to fit specific groups, individuals, organizations, and circumstances, making it essential to understand the diverse leadership philosophies available for effective leadership (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015). Leadership styles are as varied as leadership definitions, with different researchers developing many styles. The way a leader fulfills their tasks and directs organizational operations defines their leadership style, with some prioritizing tasks over team members and others focusing on relationships (Nsubuga, 2008). In Uganda, studies show that the most common leadership styles employed in educational institutions are autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire, each reflecting the leader's ideals, personality, and organizational needs (Nsubuga, 2008; Adimola, 2014). When dissatisfaction arises regarding students' performance, blame often shifts between school administration, students, and teachers, highlighting the complex interplay of leadership styles in educational outcomes (Adimola, 2014).

2.4.3.1 Autocratic Leadership Style

The autocratic (authoritarian) leadership style centralizes authority around the leader, directing all group interactions and decisions to them, often at the expense of team collaboration and individual input (Adimola, 2014). This style emphasizes performance over the well-being of subordinates, limiting opportunities for staff and team members to contribute ideas, even when beneficial to the organization (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015). Autocratic leadership is characterized by control, manipulation, and hard labor, where the leader maintains complete control, including over rewards and

punishments, which can hinder employees from reaching their performance goals (Adimola, 2014). Nsubuga (2008) further explains that under this style, the leader makes decisions that the employees must execute, resulting in restricted employee performance and minimal engagement, as additional involvement could lead to issues. While autocratic leadership allows for quick decision-making and immediate implementation, it is based on the assumption that people are lazy, irresponsible, and untrustworthy, leaving planning and decision-making solely to the leader (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015; Adimola, 2014). Nsubuga (2008) highlights that this approach often leaves subordinates with little influence, causing discomfort and fear among teachers and students under authoritarian leaders, which ultimately limits their potential.

2.4.3.2 Democratic Leadership Style

The democratic leadership style involves leaders making final decisions while actively involving team members in the process. This style is marked by decentralization of authority, participatory planning, and open communication, where leaders seek input from subordinates before deciding (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015). According to Nsubuga (2008), democratic leaders collaborate with their teams, sometimes allowing voting on issues, while retaining the final authority. Adimola (2014) emphasizes that this style promotes effective school operations by involving those affected by decisions in the decision-making process, enhancing performance and fostering collaboration, teamwork, and empowerment. However, despite its benefits, the democratic approach can be time-consuming, potentially leading to confusion and diluted decision quality, making it less suitable in crisis situations or when quick decisions are needed (Nsubuga, 2008; Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015). Additionally, it may be challenging if team members lack the necessary skills to provide valuable feedback (Adimola, 2014).

2.4.3.2 The Laissez-Faire, or Free-Rein, Leadership Style

The laissez-faire, or free-rein, leadership style is characterized by leaders who delegate authority to subordinates, allowing them to operate independently with minimal oversight. Leaders practicing this style provide resources and guidance only when necessary, trusting their employees to manage tasks, make decisions, and set their schedules autonomously (Ololube et al., 2015). Adimola (2014) refers to this approach as authentic leadership, where management intentionally chooses to delegate power and refrains from interference unless assistance is required. While effective with experienced and motivated staff, the laissez-faire style can be problematic in environments requiring close supervision or where employees lack the necessary skills or motivation. Nsubuga (2008) observes that this style places less emphasis on performance, assuming that people are unpredictable and uncontrollable, with leaders often maintaining a low profile and avoiding intervention. Compared to autocratic leadership, which involves strict supervision, or democratic leadership, which emphasizes shared decision-making and empowerment, laissez-faire leadership is more hands-off, focusing on allowing employees to operate with minimal oversight (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015).

2.5 Leadership Models in Educational Institutions

Prior to the 1900s, school leadership was not distinctly recognized apart from teaching roles, and the understanding of leadership was largely shaped by concepts and reasoning rather than empirical evidence. Early leadership theories, such as the "great man" theory, posited that leadership qualities were innate rather than acquired, leading to the development of the "trait theory," which focused on identifying specific leadership traits. This evolved into the "behavioural theory," which categorized effective leadership behaviours into task-oriented, relational-oriented, change-oriented, and passive styles.

Task-oriented behaviours involve goal setting and team organization, relational-oriented behaviours emphasize relationship quality, and change-oriented behaviours focus on innovation and vision creation, while passive leadership is characterized by inaction in the absence of problems (Gumus et al., 2018; Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

The post-World War II era saw the emergence of situational/contingency leadership, challenging the idea of a single best leadership practice and emphasizing context-dependent leadership styles. Situational leadership posits that the effectiveness of leadership techniques depends on the task-related maturity levels of individuals or groups (Nsubuga, 2008). In recent decades, leadership models such as distributed, teacher, and instructional leadership have gained prominence, driven by qualitative research on successful schools. These studies highlight that strong leadership significantly impacts educational outcomes, leading to the adaptation of leadership models from other organizations into educational contexts (Gumus et al., 2018; Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

2.5.1 Managerial Leadership

Managerial leadership in education, rooted in Taylor's scientific management theory from the early 20th century, focuses on the efficient execution of functions, tasks, and behaviours within an organization. This model emerged during the "scientific management era," when education was viewed as a rational-technical system, with leadership defined by the visible behaviors of leaders operating within organizational and legal constraints (Taylor, 1911). The managerial leadership approach emphasizes overseeing existing school procedures rather than developing innovative visions, aligning closely with the bureaucratic structure and often reflecting practices in centralized

educational systems (Bush, 2003, pp. 39-42). The managerial leadership model assumes that human behavior is logical and that authority is distributed formally within the bureaucratic structure, facilitating the smooth functioning of the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 34). However, this model's focus on efficiency and procedure implementation, as dictated by external management, often overlooks the social and relational aspects of school leadership (Fayol, 1949, p. 82; Gumus et al., 2018, pp. 55-57). After the 1930s, the influence of social sciences like psychology and sociology introduced a more humanitarian perspective in educational leadership, marking the transition to the "human relations era," which prioritized the relationships and human relations skills of school leaders (Barnard, 1938; Gumus et al., 2018, p. 60).

2.5.2 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership emerged as a prominent theory in educational administration during the 1960s and 1970s, driven by research that highlighted the importance of leaders focusing on teaching and learning to be effective. Successful school principals were found to prioritize the instructional aspects of education, including evaluating the quality of instruction, providing feedback, aligning programs with school objectives, and supporting teachers with the necessary resources and motivation. Their role also involved setting academic goals, developing instructional strategies, and monitoring student progress (Gumus et al., 2018; Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

The concept of instructional leadership, although initially vague, was further refined in the 1980s into three key components: fostering a positive school learning climate, defining the school mission, and managing the instructional program (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Principals were expected to safeguard instructional time, encourage

teacher development, uphold academic standards, and maintain high visibility. Additionally, they were tasked with framing and communicating the school's goals, coordinating the curriculum, supervising instruction, and tracking student progress (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982).

While early understandings of instructional leadership were largely principal-centered, contemporary literature has shifted toward a more democratic approach, with emerging concepts such as "learning-centered leadership" and "leadership for learning" gaining traction over the past decade (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). This shift emphasizes collaboration among teachers, principals, and other stakeholders in the pursuit of academic excellence (Neumerski, 2012).

2.5.3 Curriculum Leadership

Curriculum leadership is a critical component of instructional leadership, focusing on the development, implementation, and management of a school's curriculum. This leadership model is especially relevant in decentralized educational systems, where curriculum development occurs at the school or district level. Curriculum leaders are responsible for overseeing the curriculum, making key decisions related to personnel, supervision, scheduling, and resource allocation to ensure effective curriculum implementation (Gumus et al., 2018; Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

Historically, the curriculum leadership model prioritized school administrators as the sole decision-makers in curriculum creation and improvement. However, a more modern approach advocates for a distributed leadership perspective, where teachers and other school staff are actively involved in curriculum decision-making (Ho, 2010; Law, Galton, & Wan, 2007). Despite its distinct focus, the curriculum leadership model has

occasionally been used interchangeably with instructional leadership. This model encompasses various elements such as objective formulation, planning, program and staff development, culture building, and resource allocation (Lo, 2012; Gumus et al., 2018; Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

2.5.4. Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership emerged as a response to the limitations of the instructional leadership model, which centers on a single powerful leader managing all aspects of curriculum and instruction. Critics argue that school administrators are often overwhelmed with managerial duties and may lack the specialized knowledge required for effective curriculum leadership, making it impractical for one individual to handle all responsibilities (Gumus et al., 2018; Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

Distributed leadership, in contrast, views leadership as the collective interaction among leaders, followers, and their specific contexts. This approach emphasizes collaboration, shared decision-making, and the collective construction of meaning and knowledge among staff members. It challenges traditional hierarchical leadership structures, advocating for greater staff involvement in solving organizational problems and coordinating work (Grenda & Hackmann, 2014; Harris, 2009). Over the past decade, distributed leadership has been widely researched in educational settings, and terms like "shared leadership," "collaborative leadership," "delegated leadership," and "dispersed leadership" are often used interchangeably with it in the literature (Galdames-Calderón, 2023; Spillane, 2005).

2.5.5. Teacher Leadership

The concept of delegating leadership responsibilities to school staff has led to extensive research on how teachers can exhibit leadership within schools. The notion of teacher leadership was first developed in the 1990s by North American scholars and later gained traction in the UK during the 2000s. Teacher leadership is based on the idea that teachers play a crucial role in the operation of schools and the core functions of teaching and learning. It posits that leadership is a distributed agency, where any member of the organization has the potential to lead (Muijs & Harris, 2003; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teacher leadership manifests when teachers engage in school decision-making, contribute to the professional development of their colleagues, share their expertise, and generate new ideas for school improvement (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Gumus et al., 2018).

In recent years, scholars have argued that teacher leadership is essential for enhancing the culture of continuous professional development within schools. Teachers who assume leadership roles often facilitate professional learning communities, share instructional strategies, and contribute to curriculum development (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008; Lieberman et al., 2011). Additionally, effective teacher leadership has been associated with improvements in student learning outcomes and the overall performance of schools (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009).

2.5.6. Transformational and Charismatic Leadership

Transformational leadership has been a prominent model in educational research over the past three decades, emerging in the 1990s as a response to hierarchical and top-down leadership styles. Unlike transactional leadership, which focuses on coordinating tasks and ensuring workflow, transformational leadership emphasizes motivating followers by

aligning them with organizational goals and encouraging them to prioritize the organization's success over personal interests. Gumus et al. (2018) identified four key components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. These components suggest that leadership is a collective effort rather than the product of a single individual.

Transformational leadership is often associated with charismatic leadership due to its focus on influencing followers and promoting significant organizational change. Gumus et al. (2018) argued that transformational leadership can be seen as an extended form of charismatic leadership, which involves communicating a vision that challenges the status quo, intellectually stimulating followers, setting high expectations, and engaging in exemplary behavior. However, while charismatic leadership is integral to transformational leadership theory, it has also developed its own distinct literature (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

Additionally, Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1999) argue that transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in schools undergoing reform or facing significant changes. They emphasize that transformational leadership involves not only guiding followers through change but also fostering a shared vision and promoting professional development among staff.

Research also shows that transformational leadership has a positive impact on student outcomes. Day, Gu, & Sammons (2016) noted that transformational leaders often engage in strategies that directly influence teaching and learning, such as promoting teacher collaboration, setting high expectations, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Bush (2007) further emphasizes that transformational leadership in

education involves aligning the school's mission with the personal and professional growth of both teachers and students, contributing to long-term school improvement.

2.5.7 Moral and Ethical Leadership

In the evolution of educational leadership, particularly in the post-behavioural-science era, several key models have emerged. Among these, transformational leadership stands out, characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate followers by aligning them with organizational goals and encouraging selflessness for the greater good. However, as Gumus et al. (2018) highlight, charisma alone does not guarantee ethical leadership. Leaders with transformational qualities must also embody and promote strong moral principles, distinguishing themselves as both moral individuals and moral managers. A moral person is characterized by objectivity, societal concern, and adherence to ethical decision-making, while a moral manager actively promotes ethical behavior within the organization by setting an example, rewarding ethical conduct, and maintaining discipline (Bush, 2007).

In addition to transformational and ethical leadership, other significant models have influenced educational research. These include managerial leadership, which focuses on tasks, functions, and behaviors within the bureaucratic structure; instructional leadership, which emphasizes the principal's role in guiding teaching and learning; distributed leadership, which advocates for the delegation of leadership roles across staff; and teacher leadership, which recognizes the central role of teachers in decision-making and school development. Beyond these well-known models, other forms such as technological leadership, strategic leadership, servant leadership, visionary leadership, and authentic leadership have also been explored in educational research, each contributing uniquely to

the understanding of effective school leadership (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999).

2.6 The Concept of Strategic Leadership

2.6.1 Strategic Leadership

Leadership studies have always been leader-centered and concentrated on the characteristics of the individual leader. Nonetheless, a number of contemporary leadership theories, including transformational leadership, strategic leadership, servant leadership, and authentic leadership, have been used to characterize effective leadership and the degree of influence leaders have on their followers. The effective and successful development of organizations is increasingly dependent on strategic leadership (Madu, Abbo & Salisu, and 2023:3).

Strategic leadership is a dynamic interaction of factors and responsibilities that helps organisations achieve their goals. This interaction comprises of coordinating actions, streamlining procedures, harmonizing organizational makeup, and keeping people motivated and committed to strategy implementation (Ogola, 2019:8).

Strategic leadership is difficult to define since it has such a vast and complex scope. The strategy is the plan, whereas strategic leadership is the thinking and decision-making needed to develop and implement the plan. Supervisory leadership focuses on leaders "in" organisations, while strategic leadership is concerned with leadership "of" organisations (Wendi Lear, 2012:3).

Strategic leadership is an integrative field that draws on interdisciplinary knowledge and ideas about leadership and human experience, as well as a variety of empirical and

conceptual inquiry methodologies. As an applied field, it employs methodical approaches for formulating plans, making decisions, and taking action. Strategic leadership is inherently collaborative, engaging participants in group processes and making decisions through an intentional and planned set of deliberations (Morrill , 2007:107-108).

Leadership shapes the organization in its current conditions and carries its position to the highest level. However, strategic leadership is to shape the organization by foreseeing the future, creating the necessary management understanding for this, and empowering other managers and employees in this direction. To direct them to be innovative and creative goals in line with the organization's goal is to provide rapid change when necessary in a competitive environment (Töre &Çilek, 2021).

Different reseachers and accademicicians approach strategic leadership in various ways. For example Wendy Lear (2012) defines strategic leadership as the ability to anticipate an organization's future and preserve flexibility in it through strategic thought and collaborative teamwork to bring about change that may be required for the organization's viability (Lear 2012, 5).

Other researchers, such as Abdulrahimzai, Muneeb, and Khan (2019), described strategic leadership as the capacity to empower staff members to make decisions on a daily basis and enhance an organization's long-term viability while promoting short-term financial stability (Abdulrahimzai, Muneeb & Khan, 2019, 5).

Jabeen (2017) defines strategic leadership as the capacity of an organisation to encourage and influence employees to make every day decisions that improve the organization's long-term viability while preserving its short-term financial stability (Jabeen Mm, 2017, 18).

Ogola (2019) states that strategic leadership entails envisioning, anticipating, and maintaining flexibility to empower others and generate required strategic changes. It also involves managing via others. Strategic leadership requires talking and listening to internal stakeholders to share knowledge and create innovative solutions to problems (Ogola, 2019).

The main objective of strategic leadership theory and study is to determine how much effect top executives have on performance (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018:1). Strategic leadership is also defined as a collection of special skills that include predicting, visualising, remaining adaptable, thinking strategically, and enabling staff members to come up with creative solutions that result in excellent performance (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018:4). Strategic leadership is built on the special skills of foreseeing, imagining, being adaptable, thinking strategically, and enabling staff members to innovate new things that result in organisational changes or transformations and, eventually, increase performance improvements (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018,5).

In general, scholars have added lessons from charismatic, transformational, visionary, adaptive, transactional, servant, reflective, transcendental, and empowered leadership, respectively, to improve the quality of strategic leadership (Abdulrahimzai, Muneeb & Khan, 2019, 2).

The majority of academics have defined strategic leadership as comprising a core set of critical practices, which include figuring out the organization's long-term objectives, identifying and utilising its core competencies, managing its people and social capital, fostering a sustainable organisational culture, highlighting ethical principles, and

developing and putting into place well-balanced control systems that will both ensure organisational stability and prevent ongoing change (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018, 5).

According to the definitions of strategic leadership given by various scholars and researchers, strategic leaders or top managers are more focused on their strategic leadership responsibilities, which include empowering other members to work as partners with them, inspiring and motivating employees rather than controlling them, sharing knowledge among others, and encouraging them to strive more and more towards their goal (Jabeen 2017, 18).

Strategic leaders may anticipate, foresee, promote flexible systems, and collaborate as a team to generate change within organisations. Strategic leaders are those with the ability to persuade superiors and employees to think strategically and make decisions that benefit organisations.

By adjusting to changes necessary for their survival, strategic leaders both promote and foster innovation within their organisations. They make decisions in an unpredictable environment, and globalisation has made this uncertainty more intense (Jabeen 2017, 19-20, Serfontein & Hough, 2011, 4).

Strategic leaders not only see far into the future, but they can also make accurate predictions and projections regarding the current state of the organisation. Organisations that lack strategic leadership would struggle to achieve higher or even adequate performance in the face of various economic problems (Abdulrahimzai, Muneeb & Khan, 2019, 2).

Strategic leaders are expected to be able to adapt their leadership style to changing internal and external environment conditions and guide employees towards new goals. The practical manifestation of a leader's vision is strategic planning. Therefore strategic leaders are people who can effectively prepare and carry out plans using their knowledge, experience, abilities, and viewpoints. Among their many skills effective strategic leaders create pertinent organisational structures, allocate resources, express and communicate strategic perspectives, and exert influence over others. The success of strategic leaders is influenced by specific organisational and personal abilities and skills. While personal abilities include being adaptable and creative, using scientific knowledge, and having an innate tendency towards change and development, organisational abilities include strategic orientation, turning the strategy into action, establishing shared values, and developing the organization's strategic capacity (Kose, 2019, 4). Strategic leaders plan ahead of time to determine the direction of the organization. When they scan and deal with the critical sectors of their environment, their power grows. They establish the organization's goals and strategies, develop its structures, processes, controls, and core competencies, manage multiple constituencies, select key executives, groom the next generation of executives, provide strategic direction, maintain an influential organizational culture, uphold a system of ethical values, and represent the organization to the government and other organizations. This sort of strategic leadership must deal with unpredictability, complexity, and information overload, requiring adaptability and timeliness. strategic leaders make and communicate decisions regarding the future of their company (Madu, Abbo & Salisu, 2023, 3).

2.6.2. Principles of Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is vital for enhancing organizational performance and executing strategies effectively. According to Madu, Abbo, and Salisu (2023), strategic leaders should delegate responsibilities across all levels, allowing individuals to make decisions and experiment, which enhances organizational intelligence and adaptability. Transparency is essential, as sharing information widely prevents decision-making in the dark and encourages questioning and innovation. Strategic leaders should foster creativity by creating multiple avenues for idea generation and testing, and they must ensure future leaders have access to collaboration opportunities to avoid isolation. Experience-based learning is crucial for developing strategic capabilities, as real-world challenges provide deeper insights than classroom training. Additionally, hiring for transformation involves selecting candidates based on diverse competencies and experiences, rather than personal similarities, to drive organizational change effectively.

2.6.3 Characteristics of a Strategic Leader

Madu, Abbo, and Salisu (2023) in their study generally agree that a strategic leader needs to be unique and stand out. According to a review of the management literature, a strategic leader must possess the following qualities strategic leadership requires a blend of strong communication, active listening, and a deep commitment to the organization's goals. Effective leaders clearly articulate their vision and goals while also being attentive to their team's feedback, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and heard. Passion and dedication are essential, as leaders inspire their teams by leading by example and showing commitment to the collective mission. Maintaining a positive attitude, encouraging innovation, and promoting collaboration are crucial for a productive and motivated team. Honesty builds trust, while diplomacy helps navigate conflicts with tact.

Empathy allows leaders to connect with their team, understand their challenges, and set realistic goals, and humility ensures that leaders acknowledge their mistakes and share credit, fostering a supportive and respectful work environment.

2.6.4 Strategic Leadership in Educational Institutions

With the globalization process, multi-directional and simultaneous communication has evolved worldwide, diminishing time and location disparities. Information has become a fundamental value and gained crucial importance, accelerating the pace of change and enhancing its quality. Societies that produce, communicate, share, and utilize information will be the only ones capable of navigating this process (Altinkurt, 2007, 12). Educational institutions play a critical role in transforming every nation into an "information society".

To fulfill this responsibility, educational organizations must monitor environmental changes and effectively use and improve their present resources. Educational leaders are responsible for ensuring that these goals are met, as efforts toward a common aim are not naturally coordinated. All the changes brought forth by the globalization phenomenon come with inherent uncertainty. To protect their organizations from the unpredictability of change, educational leaders must strive to balance changes with the organization's core values and objectives (Altinkurt, 2007, 12).

The dynamic environment in which educational organizations operate continuously alters society's expectations of these institutions. Educational leaders cannot meet these expectations while adhering strictly to bureaucratic procedures or acting solely as legislative enforcers (Bush, 2007). Educational organizations also carry cultural responsibilities, distinguishing them from other institutions. They must work to develop globally-minded, information-age individuals while simultaneously preserving and

promoting their local cultural values in a world increasingly defined by cultural homogeneity (Altinkurt, 2007,13).

The 21st century has witnessed a sharp increase in competition, sometimes to destructive levels. Employee morale and job satisfaction have a direct impact on organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, the most valuable resources today are human knowledge, skills, and abilities. As a result, the role of a leader has evolved beyond the straightforward leader-follower relationship of the past (Gumus et al., 2018). Success in leadership now hinges on fostering positive social interaction and communication within and between the groups the leader influences. In this changing landscape, educational leaders are expected to demonstrate leadership behaviors that sustain their organization's health and effectiveness in both the present and future, ultimately enhancing its overall success. To meet these challenges, leaders must think strategically and take strategic actions i.e., be "strategic leaders" (Altinkurt, 2007, 13).

2.6.5 Strategic Leadership of School Principals

The primary production process in the educational system takes place in schools. Schools are a vital and important component of the educational system, and every higher education system contributes to and supports the smooth operation of educational institutions. The leadership roles of school principals are equally vital to a school's success. As educational leaders, school administrators are largely accountable for the management of the school, the realization of learning, and the success or failure of all aspects of the school. Relationships between school principal leadership traits and school effectiveness have been documented, particularly in effective school research (Altinkurt, 2007,14; Bush, 2007).

Effective school research has been criticized for suggesting that a school's success or efficacy is solely dependent on its students' academic performance. However, it has been highlighted that a school's effectiveness is also influenced by the principal's leadership abilities (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Schools must adapt quickly to the changing global environment so they can become self directing institutions instead of receiving direction from outside sources. School principals, as the leaders of these organizations, must make wise strategic decisions within their authority to effectively maintain the life of their organizations in response to external changes. Because of these responsibilities, school principals are integral to the strategic leadership community (Altinkurt, 2007, 15).

As strategic leaders, school principals must implement radical reforms and innovations to increase the organization's effectiveness in the changing context of globalization. Certain attributes essential for good strategic leadership include vision creation, flexibility, risk-taking, strategy development, cultural architecture, resource distribution, and crisis management (Gumus et al., 2018). Schools also play a critical role in designing, implementing, and evaluating organizational strategies, as well as in developing organizational culture to ensure these practices are properly implemented (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021).

Leadership characteristics such as decision-making based on environmental conditions, strategic management, and human resource management are equally crucial for a leader's success. The efficacy of the leader influences the strategic management process, and consequently, the overall performance of the organization. The capacity and willingness

to select strategies that align with organizational goals and implement them effectively demonstrate the necessity of strategic leadership (Altinkurt, 2007,16).

2.6.6 Strategic Leadership: A Superior Model in Educational Management

Strategic Leadership stands out as the most comprehensive and effective leadership model in educational management, integrating the strengths of other approaches like Managerial, Instructional, Curriculum, Distributed, Teacher, Transformational, Charismatic, and Moral and Ethical Leadership. While these models each focus on specific aspects such as maintaining established procedures, enhancing teaching and learning, or promoting shared decision-making, Strategic Leadership combines these elements into a cohesive, forward-thinking framework that directly links leadership practices to academic outcomes. It ensures coherence, adaptability, and ethical alignment across all levels of school management, making it highly resilient to changes in the educational environment. By embedding long-term vision, ethical guidance, and holistic management, Strategic Leadership equips school administrators to drive sustainable success and achieve academic excellence amidst modern educational challenges.

2.6.7 Previous Research

In recent years, researchers have delved into the challenges within Ugandan schools and the role of strategic leadership in addressing these barriers. Asad (2021) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic barriers contributing to high dropout rates among Ugandan youth, finding that indirect costs, such as uniforms, school supplies, and extracurricular fees, make education inaccessible for many. The research highlighted that, although free primary education is available, economic hardships prevent consistent

school attendance, with rural areas experiencing the greatest impact due to the added burden of long commutes, early entry into the workforce, and childbearing.

Teacher shortages and inadequate teacher training continue to strain the Ugandan educational system. According to TISSA (2013), despite the government's Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) initiatives, staffing has not kept pace with increased enrollment. As a result, high student-to-teacher ratios compromise the quality of education, and overextended teachers struggle to meet student needs. The Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS), introduced to address these staffing shortages through recruitment and refresher training, has not met expectations, leading to frequent staffing challenges across primary schools.

The 2007 local language policy, aimed at fostering literacy and comprehension in early grades, represents another area of concern. Asad (2021) and TISSA (2013) identified obstacles to implementing this initiative, as many schools lack the resources and training necessary to deliver instruction in local languages. Further complicating matters, Uganda's linguistic diversity means that many students do not speak the nine regional languages in which resources have been developed. This leads to disparities in learning outcomes, as students in regions with different dialects face challenges in literacy acquisition.

Infrastructure deficits severely limit learning conditions, as noted by Bosco (2017), who observed that inadequate facilities, such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, undermine educational quality. These limitations are particularly detrimental in rural and underserved areas, where delayed government funding exacerbates the issue. School leaders are often forced to prioritize immediate operational needs over infrastructure improvements, creating a cycle of resource shortages and reduced educational quality.

Research by the Ministry of Education and Sports (2017) and Samson and Allida (2018) revealed that the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) remains minimal. Although the government has attempted to introduce solar-powered computers in select schools, the resources are insufficient to meet demand, leaving many students and teachers without adequate ICT exposure. Additionally, most teachers lack digital literacy training, hindering ICT adoption in classrooms and limiting students' digital skills.

In response to these challenges, researchers have underscored the importance of strategic leadership as a transformative approach within educational management. Strategic leadership involves a forward-looking and collaborative decision-making process that aligns school objectives with available resources, ensuring sustainable improvement. Madu, Abbo, and Salisu (2023) emphasized that strategic leadership helps schools adapt to dynamic environments by promoting resilience, problem-solving, and adaptive resource allocation. Leaders who embrace strategic thinking foster an inclusive, supportive school culture, motivating staff to address challenges collaboratively.

It has been demonstrated that managing teacher shortages and raising the standard of instruction require strategic leadership. By emphasizing teacher support and professional development, strategic leaders help mitigate high turnover rates and foster a more stable teaching workforce. Bosco (2017) highlighted that school leaders who engage in strategic planning, even with limited resources, can improve teacher satisfaction, reduce burnout, and create a more effective learning environment.

Strategic leadership is particularly relevant in addressing Uganda's infrastructure and ICT challenges. The Ministry of Education and Sports (2017) found that school leaders who prioritize long-term planning and community partnerships are better able to access

resources for ICT and infrastructure improvements. Samson and Allida (2018) further suggested that strategic leaders who leverage partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders can bridge funding gaps, enhancing learning facilities and ICT resources even when government support is insufficient.

In conclusion, recent research suggests that strategic leadership can serve as an essential framework for Ugandan schools facing significant challenges, from teacher shortages to inadequate infrastructure. Strategic leadership not only promotes adaptive resource management but also empowers schools to build supportive, resilient communities focused on overcoming educational barriers.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods employed, including population, selecting strategies, data gathering methods, data collection instruments, procedures, data quality control, and data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research approach using interviews to explore strategic leadership and academic achievement in Ugandan secondary and primary schools. Interview guides facilitated face-to-face conversations, allowing for in-depth data collection through probing and open-ended questions (Nsubuga, 2008). The interviews aimed to understand the leadership styles of school principals and their management practices, as well as the relationship between leadership and school performance. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to freely express their views while enabling the researcher to seek clarification. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure data accuracy.

Table 1. *Demographic Information of Participants*

Participant	Age	Gender	Title	Education Level	Profession Seniority
Participant 1	54	Male	Director	Masters Degree	34 Years
Participant 2	60	Male	Director	Degree	37 Years
Participant 3	46	Male	Head Master	Masters Degree	24 Years
Participant 4	42	Female	Head Mistress	Masters degree	19 Years
Participant 5	55	Female	Director	Degree	37 Years
Participant 6	39	Male	Director	PhD	10 Years
Participant 7	35	Male	Head Master	Degree	10 Years

Participant 8	28	Male	Head Master	Certificate	3 Years
Participant 9	49	Female	Head Mistress	Masters Degree	10 Years
Participant 10	30	Male	Head Masters	Degree	8 Years

As shown in table 1 the research population consisting of 10 participants included six headmasters and four directors from government and private secondary and primary schools across five regions of Uganda: central, east, west, north, and southern. Research assistants in Uganda conducted remote interviews, providing the researcher with a deeper understanding of the concepts under study.

3.3 Selecting Strategy

Participants were selected based on their availability during data collection, with some recommended by relatives or friends and others contacted directly by the researcher. Snowball sampling technique ensured easy access to participants (Noy, 2008), reducing time waste and providing equal opportunities for participation. Headmasters and directors were chosen for their key roles as administrators and decision-makers, responsible for overseeing school operations, curriculum, staff management, and overall student performance.

3.4 School Profiles

The study included a diverse range of schools from across the country:

Government-Aided Primary and Secondary Schools: Established by the government and religious organizations, these schools receive government funding for staff salaries, capitation, and capital development grants.

Private Primary and Secondary Schools: Founded and operated by private individuals or groups, these schools do not receive government assistance, except for teacher training and oversight by the Ministry of Education.

Private Community Schools: Established by communities on a non-profit basis, these schools are typically in areas where government services are not available.

Boarding Primary and Secondary Schools: These schools offer boarding facilities, with students living on campus.

Day Primary and Secondary Schools: These institutions operate during the day, with students arriving in the morning and leaving in the afternoon.

Urban Primary and Secondary Schools: Located in towns and cities.

Rural Primary and Secondary Schools: Found in rural areas, often lacking utilities like electricity and piped water, except for well-established schools in these regions.

3.5 Staff Profiles

In Uganda, headmasters and directors of primary and secondary schools are required to have at least a bachelor's degree, with some holding master's degrees and a few possessing PhDs. However, there is no specific training for headmasters unless they pursue a master's degree with a focus on management. Teachers generally hold either a bachelor's degree or a diploma in education (Grade Five qualification). Headmasters are primarily appointed based on their years of service and must pass an interview with the Education Service Commission, a process that applies to various appointment categories within the education service.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Interview

The study utilized interview guides as tools for direct verbal engagement with participants, employing a question-and-answer format. Semi-structured interviews were conducted primarily with school principals and directors to explore the impact of strategic leadership on academic achievement in Ugandan secondary and primary schools. This flexible approach allowed participants to freely express and clarify their views while enabling the researcher to seek further clarification. The interviews were informal, with participants choosing convenient times for the sessions, which were recorded for future reference and detailed analysis.

3.6.2 Data Collection Instruments

Three instruments were used for data collection: open-ended interview questions, an interview guide, and a smartphone for recording. The interview questions provided a structured approach, ensuring all essential topics were covered.

3.6.3 A Semi Structured Standardized Interview Approach

Semi-structured interviews with school directors and headmasters were conducted to gather data, with a different schedule for each group. The interviews, conducted in English, focused on the study's objectives and involved both preset and exploratory questions. This approach allowed interviewers to systematically cover all topics while also delving deeper into participants' responses.

3.6.4 Interview Guide

The interview guide for headmasters and directors contained three open-ended questions per item, ensuring consistency in the evaluation of all participants. This consistency

promoted fairness, kept the discussion on track, and ensured comprehensive coverage of all relevant topics.

3.6.5 An Audio Recorder

An audio recorder was used to capture the interviews, ensuring accurate documentation of the conversation, including tone and nuances. Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes.

3.6.6 Challenges Faced During Data Collection

The study faced several logistical challenges, including difficulty accessing remote interview locations due to poor roads, rough terrain, and limited transportation options, which caused delays. Limited infrastructure, such as unreliable electricity and internet in rural areas, hindered communication and the ability to charge recording devices. Additionally, time constraints arose from participants' agricultural responsibilities, while scheduling interviews during the holiday season was complicated by busy schedules and tight deadlines. The limited access to technology in rural areas further slowed communication and collaboration, and the significant community roles of headmasters and directors reduced their availability for interviews.

3.7 Data Analysis Process

The collected data was transcribed before analysis to ensure completeness. According to Adimola (2014), data analysis involves organizing and summarizing the obtained data to a high standard. Interviews recorded on a smartphone were thoroughly reviewed to identify emerging themes. The analysis included verbatim statements from participants to accurately reflect their perspectives and enhance the study's credibility.

Participants were coded (P1 to P10), while schools and regions were coded as Sch and RG, respectively, to maintain anonymity. Researchers shared their notes with participants for confirmation and used direct quotes to support the findings. The study's methods were clearly documented to allow for comparisons, and the researchers, who have significant professional experience, were involved in both the creation and execution of strategic goals.

3.7.1 Credibility

To ensure credibility in the research, the researcher prioritized building trust with headmasters and directors. This was achieved through respectful and transparent communication, clearly explaining the study's purpose and impact on educational leadership in Uganda, and guaranteeing participants' confidentiality. These steps encouraged genuine and honest feedback.

The researcher obtained approvals from key educational institutions, enhancing access and signaling official support for the study. A semi-structured interview guide was carefully designed to cover essential aspects of strategic leadership while allowing flexibility for participants to discuss topics they deemed important. In this instance, a semi-structured interview guide was thoughtfully created by first identifying key topics in strategic leadership and then combining input from qualitative researchers and leadership experts to guarantee its applicability and adaptability. The purpose of the questions was to help participants gain a greater knowledge of how leadership tactics are applied in actual educational settings by guiding them through key ideas in leadership and leaving room for open-ended responses. Pilot interviews were conducted to refine the interview guide, ensuring neutrality and effectiveness.

Emphasizing confidentiality, the researcher assured participants that their identities would remain anonymous in the final thesis, fostering openness, especially on sensitive topics. The researcher maintained a neutral stance throughout the interviews, avoiding any influence on participants' responses. After the interviews, member checking was conducted, allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of their recorded statements, further enhancing the data's reliability.

3.7.2 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the consistency and stability of the research process over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). In this study, dependability was ensured through the use of a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. The researcher conducted pilot interviews to test and refine the interview guide, ensuring that the questions were clear, neutral, and free from bias. This step helped identify any potential issues that could affect the consistency of the data. Additionally, the researcher documented the entire research process in detail, including the rationale for methodological choices, the development of the interview guide, and the procedures followed during data collection. This thorough documentation allows other researchers to follow the same procedures, which contributes to the dependability of the study.

3.7.3 Usefulness

Usefulness in qualitative research refers to the practical implications and relevance of the research findings to the target audience. The study aimed to provide insights into the influence of strategic leadership on academic achievement in Ugandan schools. The semi-structured interview guide was designed to explore critical components of leadership, such as vision articulation, stakeholder engagement, and ethical decision-making. By

allowing participants to discuss these topics in depth, the research generated valuable data that can inform educational policies and leadership practices. The findings are useful for school leaders, policymakers, and educators who are interested in improving educational outcomes through effective leadership strategies. The study's emphasis on real-world applications and the involvement of experienced educational leaders further enhances its usefulness.

3.7.4 Ethical Considerations

Educational research occurs within a complex socio-political context, influencing research decisions. To navigate these factors, the researcher adhered to ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring participants' voluntary participation. The researcher prioritized the well-being of participants, preventing any emotional or physical harm during the study. Informed consent was obtained through clear communication of the study's purpose and participants' rights, including their ability to withdraw at any time.

Pseudonyms were used to maintain the anonymity of participants and schools, and all information collected was kept confidential. The researcher ensured that data collection and analysis were securely handled, with findings shared with participants for confirmation to uphold transparency and integrity.

3.7.4 Role of Researchers

The researchers played a crucial role throughout the study, particularly during the preparatory phase, where they developed precise and relevant open-ended research questions aligned with the study's objectives. They scheduled interviews, selected appropriate locations, and set up recording equipment. During the interviews, the

researchers created a welcoming environment to encourage open communication, facilitated discussions, and sought deeper insights. They maintained objectivity by avoiding bias and refraining from influencing participants.

During data collection, the researchers accurately documented responses through notes and audio recordings, ensuring participants' privacy and managing data ethically. They transcribed the interviews, identified patterns and themes, and assessed the effectiveness of the interview process. When presenting findings, the researchers carefully analyzed the data, drew conclusions, and clearly conveyed their results in the thesis. They consistently upheld ethical principles, obtaining informed consent, respecting participants' rights, and conducting themselves with professionalism.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 FINDINGS

This chapter offers an overview of the data collected by offering the findings in relation to the objectives, and a discussion. The discussion aimed to compare results and findings.

I conducted a case study to uncover the phenomenon of strategic leadership in schools in Uganda. The study addresses five sub-questions:

RQ1: Threats Faced by Schools: What are the challenges and threats encountered by schools?

RQ2: Impact on Students: What are the impacts of these challenges on students' achievement?

RQ3: Understanding, Approaches, and Strategies of Strategic Leadership: How do schools understand, approach, and strategize strategic leadership?

RQ4: Implementation of Strategic Leadership: How do schools implement strategic leadership practices?

RQ5: Impact of Strategic Leadership: What is the impact of strategic leadership on the schools? To answer these questions, semi-structured interviews with 10 school administrators thus directors and headmasters of schools was conducted. I have coded these interviews and listed the codes.

4.1.1 Challenges of Schools, School Leaders Face

RQ1: Threats Faced by Schools: What are the challenges and threats encountered by schools?

This table organizes the challenges into themes and subthemes, providing a clear view of the main difficulties faced by school leaders in their schools.

Table 2. *Challenges Faced by School Leaders in Ugandan Schools*

Theme	Subtheme	Code Statements	Participants
Resource Constraints	Materials and Infrastructure	- Inadequate study materials - Lack of textbooks - Limited infrastructure - Lack of computers	P1, P4, P9, P10
	Financial Issues	- High operational costs - Funding constraints - Delay in fee payments	P2, P6, P7, P8, P10
Teacher-Related Issues	Quality and Quantity	- Lack of qualified teachers - Low-quality teachers - Inadequate teacher training	P1, P4, P5, P8
	Teacher Attendance	- Absenteeism - Insufficient number of teachers	P2, P8
Student Engagement and Wellbeing	Academic Engagement	- Student engagement issues - Increased stress - Emotional and mental health challenges	P7, P8
	Dropout and Performance Issues	- Early dropout - Poor performance - Involvement in negative activities	P4, P8, P9
Socio-Economic Challenges	Poverty and Accessibility	- Poverty of parents - Lack of financial support - Long distances to school	P2, P4, P8, P9
	Community and Parental Involvement	- Lack of community support - Inadequate parental involvement	P5, P8
Curriculum and Educational Quality	Curriculum Issues	- Heavy curriculum design - Curriculum changes - Politically influenced syllabus	P3, P4, P2
	Quality of Education	- Poor quality of education - Inequity in educational access - Outdated resources	P1, P4, P5

Technological Constraints	Technology Access	- Limited access to technology - Lack of internet - Insufficient computer labs	P2, P7, P10
	Utilization of Technology	- Ineffective use of available technology - Lack of technology integration in learning	P2, P5, P7

The analysis of challenges faced by school leaders in Ugandan schools provides a comprehensive view of the difficulties encountered across various themes.

In the course of interviewing directors and headmasters of various primary and secondary schools about the difficulties they confront in the schools, a number of pressing issues that have an impact on education quality were noted.

4.1.1.1 Resource Constraints

Resource Constraints are a major issue for schools, encompassing both materials and financial aspects. The severe absence of necessary educational resources, including textbooks and other reference books, is a big problem since it makes students share resources or forgo them altogether, which lowers their learning outcomes.

Inadequate study materials, lack of textbooks, limited infrastructure, and insufficient computers impede the educational process and hinder student learning. Financial constraints further exacerbate these challenges, with high operational costs, funding shortages, and delays in fee payments creating significant barriers to maintaining and improving educational standards.

Participant 1 in his words emphasized that *"As a headmaster, one of the biggest challenges i face is the inadequate study materials, especially reference books. We simply don't have enough resources to meet the needs of our students. Additionally, many of our learners*

lack basic requirements such as textbooks, which makes learning even more difficult. Another significant issue is the long distances that some students have to walk to get to school, which leaves them tired and unable to concentrate in class."

Regarding the payments and funding issues participant 6 explained that *"One of the biggest challenges we're facing right now is the delay in school fees payment by parents. This really slows down our operations because without funds, we can't run things efficiently. Some parents don't understand the value of education and intentionally delay payments. Our school is located in a rural area, and sometimes parents promise to pay after they harvest their crops, but even then, they often don't follow through. This is a very big problem for us."*

4.1.1.2Teacher-Related Issues

The quality of education is significantly impacted by high student-to-teacher ratios and teacher related issues also which pose substantial challenges. The shortage of qualified teachers and the presence of low-quality educators, combined with inadequate training, affects the overall quality of education. Teacher absenteeism and insufficient numbers of teachers exacerbate these problems, leading to inconsistencies in student learning experiences and outcomes.

Participant highlighted that *"We're always trying to balance affordability with quality, but it's a tough act, especially with so many financially struggling parents. Another issue is teacher quality and training ensuring that our teachers are well-trained is essential, but it's also a challenge."*

4.1.1.3 Student Engagement and Wellbeing

There are various aspects that influence student engagement and wellbeing. Student engagement issues, increased stress, and emotional and mental health concerns all make it difficult for students to fully participate in their education. Furthermore, early dropout rates and low academic performance, which are frequently associated with involvement in undesirable activities, show the importance of focused interventions to successfully help students.

4.1.1.4 Socio-Economic Challenges

Students' access to education is heavily impacted by socioeconomic challenges. Long distances to school combined with parental poverty and a lack of financial support lead to issues with student attendance and academic performance. Inadequate parental and community involvement also reduces the support networks that are accessible to students, which has an impact on their entire educational experience.

4.1.1.5 Curriculum and Educational Quality

Curriculum and educational quality difficulties are prevalent. The creation of a heavy and politically orientated curriculum, combined with frequent revisions, creates challenges for both students and teachers. These challenges, combined with low educational quality, unequal educational access, and outmoded resources, impair the educational system's effectiveness and limit students' chances.

Participant 3 explained that “*Recently, the curriculum was changed, and this has brought a lot of challenges with it.*” Participant four also clarified that “*The curriculum design is*

also a problem; it's too heavy for primary school students, leading to stress and poor performance."

4.1.1.6 Technological Constraints

Another important factor in the challenges schools confront is technological constraints. Students' capacity to interact with modern learning tools is limited by limited access to technology, inadequate computer laboratories, and poor internet connectivity. These problems are further exacerbated by inefficient use of the technology at hand and a lack of integration into the educational process, students of fundamental digital experiences and abilities.

Participant 2 clarified that *"We're facing low levels of technology, which limits our ability to access modern information and teaching tools."*

In a conclusion the challenges affecting the quality of education in Ugandan schools are numerous and interconnected; these include resource constraints, teacher-related issues, student engagement and wellbeing concerns, socio-economic difficulties, curriculum and educational quality problems, and technological limitations. A multifaceted strategy is needed to address these problems, including expanding access to educational resources, enhancing infrastructure, and helping families financially. Furthermore, it is imperative to make measures to reduce political meddling, improve technological integration, and guarantee proper teacher preparation. By addressing these issues from all angles, it is feasible to develop a more encouraging and productive learning environment that helps teachers and students alike and eventually improves student outcomes.

4.1.2 Impacts of Challenges on Students

RQ2: Impact on Students: What are the impacts of these challenges on students' achievement?

This table provides a clear view of the effects on student learning and academic access categorized by theme and subtheme, with participants noted.

Analyzing the effects of challenges on student learning and academic access reveals a range of impacts categorized into thematic areas.

4.1.2.1 Resource Constraints

The academic experiences and performance of students are greatly impacted by resource constraints. Poor performance outcomes are caused by problems with the infrastructure and materials, such as gaps in the learning experiences and insufficient coverage of the syllabus. Financial hardships make these issues worse because unpaid fees lead to missing classes, more stress, and subpar work. Financial hardship places a great deal of strain on students, making it difficult for them to participate in and attend class regularly.

Participant 1 clarified in his words that *"Students that face challenges like inadequate study materials and long distances to school often do not cover the syllabus as required. This results in them performing poorly because they miss out on critical lessons that are essential for their academic success."*

Table 3. *Effects of Challenges on Student Learning and Academic Access*

Theme	Subtheme	Code Statements	Participants
Resource Constraints	Materials and Infrastructure	- Incomplete syllabus coverage leading to negative performance - Gaps in learning and experience	P1, P10
	Financial Issues	- Missing classes due to unpaid fees resulting in worse performance - Increased stress and poor performance due to financial issues	P2, P6, P8, P9
Teacher-Related Issues	Quality and Quantity	- Lack of teachers leading to slow and poor-quality education - Overloaded curriculum causing poor performance	P4, P5, P7
	Teacher Attendance	- Reduced engagement and lower achievement - Increased stress due to lack of academic materials	P7, P8, P10
Student Engagement and Wellbeing	Academic Engagement	- Frequent school changes leading to poor performance - Lack of resources causing poor performance	P7, P8, P9
	Dropout and Performance Issues	- Early pregnancy leading to deaths and poor health - School dropouts leading to involvement in negative activities	P9
Socio-Economic Challenges	Poverty and Accessibility	- Missing classes due to unpaid fees resulting in worse performance - Insecurity at school causing students and teachers to leave	P1, P4, P6, P8
	Community and Parental Involvement	- Parents losing hope in their children's education - Reduced engagement due to lack of support	P5, P6, P7, P8
Curriculum and Educational Quality	Curriculum Issues	- Overloaded curriculum leading to poor performance - Limited access to quality education	P3, P4, P5, P7
	Quality of Education	- Limited access to quality education - Poor performance due to outdated resources	P4, P5, P6, P7

Technological Constraints	Technology Access	- Lack of computer labs leading to isolation from lab lessons - Insufficient materials causing inadequate learning experiences	P7, P10
	Utilization of Technology	- Gaps in learning and experience due to ineffective technology use	P2, P10

Participant 6 also explained in his words that *"When parents don't pay fees on time, we have no choice but to send students back home. Missing classes means that by the time they return, they can't catch up, leading to failure or at the very least, worsened performance."*

4.1.2.2 Teacher-Related Issues

These difficulties are exacerbated by teacher-related problems. Education is delivered slowly and of low quality in part because of a shortage of teachers and an overburdened curriculum. Academic achievement suffers as a result of this circumstance, as does engagement. Furthermore, absenteeism issues exacerbate stress levels and have a detrimental effect on students' access to learning resources, which lowers academic performance.

Participant 4 highlighted in his words that *"We lack enough teachers at the secondary school level, which makes the education process slow and of poor quality. This directly affects our students' performance, as they don't receive the attention and guidance they need to excel in their studies."*

4.1.2.3 Student Engagement and Wellbeing

Academic performance and overall wellbeing are further negatively impacted by dropout rates, which are frequently influenced by issues like early pregnancy. Dropout rates also have a significant negative impact on student engagement and wellbeing. Recurrent

school closures and a lack of resources lead to poor performance as students struggle to adapt and lack the necessary tools for learning.

Participant 9 emphasized in his words that *"Students who drop out of school often end up in negative situations, like joining peer groups that lead them astray. In some cases, early pregnancy not only disrupts their education but can also lead to death of young mothers, creating a tragic outcome."*

4.1.2.4 Socio-Economic Challenges

The effects of socioeconomic challenges on students are significant. In schools, poverty and associated problems like skipping lessons because of unpaid fees lead to lower academic achievement and more insecurity. This unease may cause instructors and students to quit, upsetting the classroom atmosphere. A lack of optimism and support for the educational process leads to a reduction in community and parental involvement, which further lowers pupils' academic performance and engagement.

In his words participant 8 says that; *"Due to financial problems, some students have to change schools frequently, which disrupts their learning and leads to poor academic performance. Additionally, insecurity at school forces both students and teachers to leave, resulting in a lack of continuity in education. The lack of resources means students don't have what they need to succeed, leading to poor performance. This situation causes parents to lose hope in their children's education, further demotivating the students and leading to a vicious cycle of poor academic results."*

4.1.2.5 Curriculum and Educational Quality

Curriculum and educational quality concerns are critical for understanding the effects on student learning. An overloaded curriculum hinders students' ability to properly understand the content, resulting in low performance. Limited access to quality education, along with outmoded resources, exacerbates these issues and leads to insufficient learning opportunities.

Participant 4 stressed that *"When the resources are limited, the quality of education we provide is compromised, and students end up with a less comprehensive understanding of the subjects. Additionally, when the curriculum is too heavy, there isn't enough time to cover everything, resulting in poor performance across the board."*

4.1.2.6 Technological Constraints

Technological constraints also play an important impact. A shortage of computer laboratories and insufficient materials restrict pupils from fully participating in technology-based learning opportunities. Furthermore, inadequate use of existing technology causes learning gaps and limits students' educational experiences, putting them at a disadvantage when compared to their classmates who have greater access to technical resources.

Participant 2 mentioned in his words that *"Due to low levels of technology, our learners are unable to access the information they need for their studies, which leaves them at a disadvantage."*

Participant 10 also clarified that emphasized that *"The lack of computer labs means some students are isolated from essential lab lessons, which are crucial for gaining practical*

experience. When there aren't enough materials, students won't have enough time to get the hands-on experience they need, leading to gaps in their learning. In our overpopulated library, not every student gets a chance to study the books, which means they miss out on valuable knowledge. Overall, these issues create gaps between learning and experience, leaving students with an incomplete education."

In conclusion, student learning and academic access are significantly impacted by the difficulties that schools encounter. Reduced student performance and engagement can be caused by a variety of factors, including a lack of resources, problems with the curriculum and educational quality, issues with teachers, socioeconomic difficulties, and technology limitations. It is imperative that these issues be resolved in order to enhance educational results and guarantee that every student has the chance to achieve academic success.

4.1.3 Methods of Strategic Leadership of School Leaders

RQ3: Understanding, Approaches, and Strategies of Strategic Leadership: How do schools understand, approach, and strategize strategic leadership?

This table categorizes the strategies and initiatives used by school leaders into thematic areas, reflecting the methods and approaches they employ in strategic leadership.

Table 4. *Strategies and Initiatives to Address Challenges*

Theme	Subtheme	Code Statements	Participants
Infrastructure and Resource Management	Physical Resources	- Construction of additional classrooms and facilities - Stocking libraries with books - Borrowing equipment	P1, P3, P9, P10
	Resource Utilization	- Using in-kind payments - Improvising resources	P2, P10

Teacher Support and Development	Professional Development	- Organizing workshops - Providing additional training and mentorship	P1, P2, P4, P6, P7
	Supervision and Accountability	- Tracking teacher attendance and performance - Monitoring adherence to the curriculum	P2, P10
Student Engagement and Support	Learning Enhancements	- Encouraging extracurricular activities - Providing career counselling and language support	P3, P4, P7, P9
	Academic Programs	- Implementing project-based learning - Introducing technology and critical thinking exercises	P4, P5, P7
Community and Parental Involvement	Community Engagement	- Engaging in community events - Seeking support from community members	P1, P6, P7, P8
	Parental Involvement	- Involving parents in school activities - Encouraging participation in school planning	P2, P4, P5
Administrative and Strategic Planning	Strategic Planning	- Maximizing resources - Prioritizing quality education - Strategic budgeting	P5, P7
	Operational Adjustments	- Adjusting school schedules - Managing time effectively	P4, P8
Monitoring and Evaluation	Performance Tracking	- Continuous assessment of students - Feedback from stakeholders	P1, P2, P10

Analysing the strategies and initiatives used by school leaders to address challenges reveals several thematic areas reflecting their understanding, approaches, and methods in strategic leadership.

4.1.3.1 Infrastructure and Resource Management

Infrastructure and resource management are key themes, with school administrators emphasising both physical resources and their use. Leaders handle infrastructure issues by building new classrooms, supplying libraries with books, and borrowing equipment, all of which are essential for accommodating expanding student populations and improving the learning environment. Efficient resource utilisation is also emphasised, with methods such as in-kind payments and resource enhancements assisting in maximising available assets despite budget limits.

Participant 1 emphasized on the point by explaining that *"We are working on constructing more buildings to create additional space, which will result in a more conducive learning environment for our students. With more classrooms, we can reduce congestion and improve the overall quality of education. Additionally, we are focusing on stocking the library with the necessary books so that students have access to all the resources they need for their studies. We also encourage parents to provide basic learning materials for their children, such as notebooks and pens, to ensure they come to school prepared."*

4.1.3.2 Teacher Support and Development

The concept of Teacher Support and Development emphasises the value of making investments in the professional development of teachers and guaranteeing their accountability. To this end, school administrators plan workshops, offer extra training and mentorship, and keep track of teachers' attendance, performance, and curriculum adherence all of which are critical to upholding high teaching standards and making sure that learning objectives are met.

In his words and expression participant 1 explained that *“In our school, we place a strong emphasis on employing qualified and experienced teachers because they bring a wealth of knowledge and teaching expertise that directly benefits our students. We also actively promote research among learners by encouraging them to explore topics beyond the classroom, which fosters a deeper understanding and critical thinking. To keep our teachers up-to-date with the latest educational practices, we make sure they attend workshops and seminars, which help them stay informed and motivated.”*

4.1.3.3 Student Engagement and Support

Student Engagement and Support involves ways for improving student experiences and academic success. Leaders promote extracurricular activities and offer career counselling and language assistance to engage students and meet their different needs. The use of project-based learning, as well as the incorporation of technology and critical thinking exercises into academic programs, demonstrate a dedication to creating an engaging and forward-thinking educational environment.

Participant 7 emphasized on the issues by explaining that *“To make learning more engaging and relevant, we’ve implemented project-based learning, where students work on hands-on projects that apply real-world scenarios, such as art students making crafts. We also encourage collaborative learning, which promotes teamwork and social skills among students. To monitor student progress, we use formative assessments regularly, which helps us adjust our teaching methods as needed. We’ve also established a feedback mechanism with suggestion boxes, allowing students to voice their concerns and helping us improve the quality of education. Our mentorship programs pair students with mentors who guide them both academically and personally, providing crucial support.”*

4.1.3.4 Community and Parental Involvement

The involvement of parents and the community shows how schools can use outside assistance to enhance student learning. Schools can better integrate into their local surroundings and create a network of support by participating in community events and asking for assistance from locals. Comparably, incorporating parents in school events and planning procedures encourages a team approach to learning and fortifies the bond between the home and the school.

Participant 6 mentioned in his words that *“We also receive guidance from our community and parents, which has helped us implement strategies that resonate well with our students, leading to noticeable improvements in their academic careers.”*

Participant also clarified that *“The community also plays a role in monitoring students during their day out, helping to reinforce discipline and focus.”*

4.1.3.5 Administrative and Strategic Planning

The strategic management of resources and operational modifications are part of administrative and strategic planning. In order to ensure that material and financial resources are distributed efficiently to support educational goals, leaders prioritise quality education through strategic budgeting and resource maximisation. Scheduling changes for schools and modifications to time management techniques also demonstrate a flexible response to operational issues.

Participant 7 gave clarifications on this point in his words saying that *“One of the key indicators of our success is the improvement in standardized test scores. We also conduct student surveys to gather feedback on their learning experiences, which helps us identify*

areas for improvement. Through classroom observations, we ensure that the teaching strategies we've implemented are effective. Tracking academic progress over time allows us to monitor individual students and provide the support they need to succeed. We also keep an eye on behavioral metrics, as changes in behavior can signal whether our methods are working. Lesson plan reviews are conducted regularly to ensure that lessons are aligned with our educational goals."

4.1.3.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation is a critical theme for ensuring ongoing improvement and accountability. Continuous assessment of students and feedback from stakeholders are key strategies for tracking performance and making data-driven decisions. These practices help school leaders identify areas for improvement and respond effectively to challenges.

Participant 10 emphasized on monitoring and evaluation by saying that "*Our assessments are designed to directly reflect the performance of our students. By closely aligning our tests and evaluations with the curriculum, we can accurately measure how well the students are grasping the material. This approach allows us to identify areas where students need additional support and adjust our teaching methods accordingly to ensure continuous improvement. We've recently introduced prep projectors in our classrooms, which has greatly enhanced the learning experience. These projectors allow us to present information in a more engaging and interactive way, making it easier for students to understand complex topics."*

School administrators have taken a comprehensive approach to tackling educational difficulties, as seen by the tactics and activities they have implemented. School

administrators exhibit a comprehensive comprehension and utilisation of strategic leadership concepts to improve school outcomes and effectively tackle obstacles by emphasising infrastructure, teacher support, student engagement, community involvement, strategic planning, and evaluation.

4.1.4 Implementation of Strategic Leadership in Schools

R4: Implementation of Strategic Leadership: How do schools implement strategic leadership practices?

Table 5. *Implementation of Strategic Leadership to Address Challenges*

Themes	Subthemes	Codes Statements	Participants
Community Engagement	Community Engagement Practices	- Appointed a community member to the Board - Set up community counselors - Engaged through mosque - Ran outreach programs	P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P8
	Communication and Feedback	- Created WhatsApp groups - Gathered feedback - Held meetings	P4, P6, P7, P8
	Support and Empowerment	- Set up PTA - Ran community programs - Engaged leaders	P2, P5, P10
Support and Empowerment of Staff	Empowerment and Responsibility	- Delegated authority - Involved teachers in decision-making	P1, P2, P3
	Professional Development	- Provided training - Offered seminars	P3, P7
	Support and Resources	- Provided teaching materials - Timely salary payment	P4, P8, P9
	Communication and Culture	- Maintained open communication - Fostered positive culture	P5, P7, P9
Vision Setting	Collaborative Vision Development	- Engaged stakeholders - Gathered input for vision	P4, P5, P7

	Values and Goals	- Emphasized values - Set measurable visions	P1, P3, P6, P8
	Communication and Alignment	- Used assemblies for vision - Aligned actions with vision	P9, P10
Decision-Making Process	Student-Centered Approaches	- Implemented student-centered learning - Introduced scholarships	P4, P5, P7, P9
	Community and Context	- Made decisions with community guidance - Increased staff	P8, P10
	Sensitivity and Adaptation	- Handled disciplinary issues sensitively - Replaced aging headmaster	P2, P6
Strategies for Collaboration	Collaborative Culture	- Built a collaborative culture - Established learning communities	P5, P7
	Communication and Engagement	- Organized meetings - Engaged community	P1, P2, P6, P8, P9
	Recognizing Contributions	- Recognized achievements - Celebrated successes	P4, P7

4.1.4.1 Thematic Analysis of Community Engagement in Academic Success

Community Representation and Involvement

Integration of community people in school governance was stressed by several participants. In order to promote inclusivity and involve the community in school decision-making, Participants 1 and 8 nominated members or representatives. By guaranteeing that the community is involved in the governance of the school, the appointment makes sure that the school's operations are in line with the needs and interests of the community. The community's commitment to the schools' success is strengthened by this strategy, which guarantees transparency while also fostering mutual trust between the school and the community.

Participant 1 in his words he clarified that *“We appointed a community member to sit on the Board of Directors with limited powers, representing the community. This role ensures that the community's perspective is included in our decision-making processes, which helps align our policies with local needs. Additionally, involving the community in school activities that impact academic excellence fosters a collaborative environment. By engaging community members in our educational initiatives, we strengthen the support network around our students and enhance their overall success. This approach not only builds a stronger connection between the school and the community but also contributes significantly to achieving our academic goals.”*

Parental and Teacher Collaboration:

Multiple participants Participants 2, 4, and 5 emphasised the establishment of Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs), the organisation of seminars, and the formation of WhatsApp groups to ensure constant connection between the school and parents. According to Participant 2, the development of a Parents-Teachers' Association (PTA) promotes collaboration between parents and teachers, ensuring that parents are actively involved in their children's education. Participant 4 remarked that the development of WhatsApp groups for parents provides for ongoing feedback and communication, making it simpler to handle concerns quickly. This promotes a strong collaboration, improves academic achievements, and reinforces a feeling of community ownership of education.

Community Engagement in Educational and Extracurricular Activities:

Participants 3, 5, and 7 took part in school activities such sports days, outreach initiatives, and fund-raisers that involved the community. They also underlined how important it is for the community to support and mentor students in their academic endeavours. This

suggests that community members actively contribute to academic advancement in addition to being viewed as stakeholders.

Moral and Social Support:

While police personnel, as noted by participant 2, were called to address crime prevention, community leaders, such as the village imam, offered moral and religious instruction to pupils. These programs support the establishment of a moral and socially conscious learning environment that goes beyond academic instruction.

4.1.4.2 Thematic Analysis of Leadership Empowering Staff for Academic Success

Delegation of Authority:

Participants 1 and 2 emphasised that giving authority to department leaders and teachers in particular empowers employees. By encouraging greater responsibility and departmental cooperation, this empowerment eventually enhances academic results by fostering accountability and decision-making autonomy.

Professional Development and Training:

Many participants for example, Participants 3, 6, and 7 emphasised the need of regular staff training sessions, seminars, and professional development programs. This is viewed as an important tool for providing teachers with the most recent teaching methods, allowing them to contribute more effectively to students' academic progress.

Participant 3 in his words clarified that “*we hold regular staff meetings to share school updates, solicit feedback on initiatives, and discuss curriculum development. This fosters a collaborative environment where everyone feels valued and has a voice*”

Positive Work Environment and Motivation:

Participants 4, 5, and 9 emphasised the necessity of creating a supportive work environment through prompt salary payments, allowances, recognition, and constructive comments. This inspires workers and develops a healthy school culture, which helps to retain teachers and improves academic performance.

Participant 5 in his words explained saying that *“we have a "Teacher of the Month" program that recognizes and celebrates outstanding contributions and innovative teaching approaches. i organize staff appreciation events and celebrate school-wide achievements to acknowledge the collective effort and boost staff morale. i maintain an open-door policy, allowing teachers to share concerns, offer suggestions, and discuss challenges they face in their classrooms. This fosters trust and open communication.”*

Collaboration and Communication:

Open communication, regular meetings, and feedback sessions highlighted by Participants 1, 5, and 7 were identified as critical leadership methods for maintaining staff coordination and alignment with school administration, guaranteeing the seamless implementation of academic and extracurricular programming.

4.1.4.3 Thematic Analysis of Vision Setting in Schools***Shared Vision Development:***

Participants 4 and 5 emphasised collaborative vision building, which included key stakeholders such as workers, parents, and community leaders. This strategy guarantees that all members of the school community share and support the goal, providing a clear path for academic improvement.

Alignment with Values:

Several participants such as Participants 3 and 8 emphasised moral and religious aspects in their vision setting. Raising a disciplined and God-fearing generation was viewed as critical to the school's mission, emphasising the significance of incorporating social and moral ideals alongside scholastic goals.

Participant 3 explained in his words that *"We set our vision centering on producing well-trained, morally, and religiously upright citizens. This vision guides all our school's activities, ensuring that both students and teachers are aware of and committed to these values. We actively sensitize the community, students, and staff about the importance of following this vision, which helps in creating a cohesive and morally grounded educational environment."*

Community-Centered Vision:

Participants 2 and 10 connected their school's goal with community needs, strengthening the school-community bond. By ensuring that the vision is relevant to the local context, these leaders boosted community buy-in, which improved school governance and student achievement.

4.1.4.4 Thematic Analysis of Decision-Making Impact on Education Quality

Student-Centered Learning:

Participants 4 and 5 took a student-centered approach that was consistent with new educational needs such as 21st-century competencies. The use of this technique following pilot programs indicated by participant 5 demonstrates leadership's openness to innovative teaching methodologies targeted at increasing educational quality.

Participant 5 in his words gave details on the approach of student centered learning explaining that *“certainly! Recently, i led a decision-making process regarding the implementation of a new student-centered learning approach in our school. The decision to transition to this approach stemmed from a growing recognition of the need to adapt to changing educational paradigms and better meet the diverse learning needs of our students. This has had a positive impact to students whereby Students are more engaged in their learning as they have greater autonomy and opportunities for self-directed exploration, the new approach has encouraged students to think critically, solve problems creatively, and collaborate with their peers, and we have seen an improvement in academic performance across various subjects as students are more actively involved in their learning process. The shift to student-centered learning has fostered a positive learning environment where students feel valued, supported, and motivated to succeed”*

Community-Driven Decision-Making:

Participants 1, 8, and 9 emphasised the need of incorporating community feedback and participation into decision-making processes such as electing leaders, introducing scholarships, and expanding digital literacy resources. This collaborative decision-making ensures that school programs are contextually relevant and well-supported.

Resource and Infrastructure Improvement:

Participants 6 and 10 focused on upgrading the school's infrastructure, such as hiring more teachers or replacing an unproductive headmaster. These decisions had a direct impact on educational quality since they improved the settings in which students and teachers function.

Participant 6 explained, *"The decision made recently was replacing the headmaster. I had an aging headmaster who was around 70 years old and at retirement age, so we thought the tasks and requirements of the job would be challenging for him. We don't regret the decision because we have seen improvements since making the change."*

4.1.4.5 Thematic Analysis of Collaboration Among Stakeholders

Professional Learning Communities and Teamwork:

Participants 5, 7, and 10 advocated for the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs), student leadership teams, and collaboration in curriculum creation. These collaborative activities foster an environment of shared goals and accountability, thereby improving academic performance.

Participant 5 in his words explained that *"i establish professional learning communities (PLCs) where teachers from different disciplines or grade levels can work together to share best practices, analyze student data, and develop targeted interventions. i empower students by creating leadership teams that participate in school improvement initiatives, curriculum development, and peer mentoring programs."*

Community and Stakeholder Engagement:

Participants 8 and 9 participated in school events with the community and local government authorities, bridging the gap between the school and society at large. Such involvement guarantees that the school is responsive to the requirements of its stakeholders, establishing a positive academic environment.

Communication and Dialogue:

Open communication and dialogue were stressed by participants 1, 2, and 3, who also recommended organising frequent meetings and conversations between staff and stakeholders. This promotes openness and facilitates group problem-solving, which strengthens teamwork and boosts academic achievement.

Overall, putting strategic leadership approaches into effect in schools requires a multimodal strategy that includes involving the community, empowering and supporting staff, articulating a clear vision, making decisions that are focused on the needs of the students, and encouraging collaboration. These methods are crucial for efficiently resolving issues and improving students' overall educational experience and results.

4.1.5 Impact of Strategic Leadership

RQ5: Impact of Strategic Leadership: What is the impact of strategic leadership on the schools?

This table organizes the codes into broader themes and subthemes to provide a clear understanding of the impacts and practices of strategic leadership in Ugandan schools.

Table 6. *Impacts of Strategic Leadership on Ugandan Schools*

Themes	Subthemes	Code Statements	Participants
Effectiveness of Methods & Strategies	Assessment and Evaluation	- Continuous assessment of learners - Routine evaluation of learner outcomes - Analysis of exam results	P1, P2, P3
	Teacher and Student Improvement	- Positive changes in teachers after workshops - Improved standardized test scores - Student feedback and surveys	P4, P5, P7
	Community Support	- Hiring qualified teachers - Provision of new textbooks - Guidance from the community and parents	P6, P9
	Monitoring and Tracking	- Daily monitoring of staff - Student attendance tracking - Enhanced security around the school	P8, P10
Contribution of Community Engagement	Academic Support	- Involvement in school meetings - Monitoring attendance and study habits - Community partnerships and resources	P1, P4, P7
	Motivational and Behavioral Impact	- Strengthens learning ecosystem - Builds supportive network - Increases student motivation and engagement	P5, P6, P9
	Positive Examples	- Community initiatives shaping discipline - Appreciation through gifts - Collaboration with community centers	P1, P4, P7
Effective Leadership Contribution	Environment and Planning	- Creating conducive learning environment - Effective planning - Setting clear goals and vision	P1, P2, P5
	Teamwork and Development	- Improving communication - Supporting and empowering teachers - Prioritizing professional development	P3, P7, P9

	Accountability and Innovation	- Resource allocation - Engaging with the community - Establishing accountability systems	P7, P8, P10
Leadership Style and Academic Outcomes	Positive Influence	- Securing sponsorships - Effective communication - Hiring trained personnel	P1, P2, P3
	Community and Teacher Development	- Enhanced resources through partnerships - Implementing differentiated instruction - Mentorship and recognition	P4, P6, P7
	Motivation and Discipline	- Creating a culture of discipline - Motivating the school community - Impact on sports and grades	P8, P9, P10

The impact of strategic leadership on Ugandan schools is multifaceted, with various themes and subthemes reflecting how effective leadership practices influence school performance and outcomes.

4.1.5.1 Effectiveness of Methods & Strategies

A major subject that illustrates how strategic leadership improves educational practices is the effectiveness of methods and strategies. Monitoring and enhancing student achievements depend heavily on regular evaluations, exam result analysis, and ongoing learner assessment. Promising alterations in educators subsequent to workshops and enhanced scores on standardised assessments underscore the advantages of professional growth and efficient pedagogical approaches. More community support hiring teachers with the necessary qualifications, buying new textbooks, and getting parental guidance also adds to a stronger learning environment. Furthermore, procedures like staff daily observation, attendance tracking, and improved school security highlight how crucial it is to keep an eye on things and establish a secure learning environment.

Participant 1 in his words on the learners assessment clarified that *"We focus on continuous assessment of learners to monitor their progress throughout the academic year. By regularly evaluating their performance, we can identify areas where students are struggling and provide targeted support to help them improve. This approach has been effective in ensuring that students stay on track and achieve better academic outcomes."*

4.1.5.2 Contribution of Community Engagement

The role that community engagement plays in enhancing the impact of strategic leadership is noteworthy. Academic assistance is strengthened by involving the community in school meetings, keeping an eye on students' attendance and study habits, and establishing alliances with neighbourhood resources. In addition to strengthening the learning ecosystem, this involvement creates a network of support that raises student motivation and engagement. Good community projects, including establishing rules through neighbourhood programs and honouring successes with gifts and teamwork, show how community involvement improves school climate and student conduct.

4.1.5.3 Effective Leadership Contribution

Effective Leadership Contribution involves a variety of leadership aspects that contribute to school performance. Creating a favourable learning atmosphere, good planning, and establishing clear goals and vision are all essential for fostering a productive educational environment. Improving communication, assisting and empowering teachers, and prioritising professional development demonstrate a dedication to collaboration and development. Additionally, strategic leadership entails responsibility and creativity through resource allocation, community participation, and the establishment of

accountability systems, all of which are critical for maintaining and improving school performance.

4.1.5.4 Leadership Style and Academic Success

Leadership Styles and Academic Outcomes show how leadership behaviours directly affect students' academic success. Getting sponsorships, communicating well, and employing qualified staff all have a favourable impact on students' academic performance. Student success and teacher growth are facilitated by the use of individualised education, enhanced resources obtained through community partnerships, and mentorship and recognition. Further illustrating the role of strategic leadership in forming a comprehensive educational experience are the ways in which it influences extracurricular activities like athletics and grades, fosters a culture of discipline within the school, and inspires the school community.

Participant 6 clarified in his words that *"As I mentioned earlier, we've brought in new qualified teachers who have made a significant difference in our students' performance. By purchasing new textbooks, we've equipped our teachers with the resources they need to deliver high-quality lessons. We also receive guidance from our community and parents, which has helped us implement strategies that resonate well with our students, leading to noticeable improvements in their academic careers."*

In general, strategic leadership in Ugandan schools results in better teaching efficacy, increased community involvement, successful leadership techniques, and favourable academic results. Strategic leadership has a major impact on the general success and quality of teaching at these schools by emphasising ongoing assessment, community support, leadership development, and inspiring staff and students.

4.2 DISCUSSION

The major goal of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of strategic leadership in improving academic performance in Ugandan primary and secondary schools. This study was carried out within the context of comparing the challenges and practices of Ugandan school leaders to global and regional literature on strategic leadership in educational institutions. The study aimed to identify both the universal characteristics of strategic leadership and the unique issues specific to Uganda's educational landscape. This section will provide a full explanation of the study's findings in contrast to past research, examining how strategic leadership is applied in educational settings and the consequences on overall performance.

4. 2.1 Overview of Strategic Leadership in Education

Strategic leadership, particularly in the education sector, has been widely researched during the previous two decades. Scholars such as Hitt and Ireland (2011) define strategic leadership as a style that blends visionary leadership with the ability to implement long-term organisational growth initiatives. The leadership style has shown particularly useful in dynamic situations where adaptability and creativity are essential for success, such as educational institutions (Hitt & Ireland, 2011). Similarly, this study discovered that strategic leadership benefits Ugandan schools greatly when applied properly, particularly in resource management, decision-making, and the formation of collaborative educational settings.

The results of this study support previous research, such as that of Gumus et al. (2018), which has shown that leadership in educational settings requires more than just administrative responsibilities. It also involves developing strategic initiatives that support more general educational objectives. When school leaders take on the role of

strategic leaders, they not only handle day-to-day administrative duties but also have a significant impact on the long-term academic performance of their institutions through resource management, stakeholder engagement, and vision-setting.

4.2.2 Strategic Leadership Challenges in Uganda

4.2.2.1 Resource Constraints and Infrastructure Issues

One of the research's most important conclusions was how severely resource-constrained Ugandan schools are, making it difficult to use strategic leadership in an efficient manner. One of the main obstacles is still the absence of educational materials, infrastructure, and sufficient funding. This is consistent with earlier research by Nsubuga (2008), who found that inadequate financing and inadequate facilities were the main obstacles to successful schooling in Uganda. According to Nsubuga's study, inadequate infrastructure leads to cramped classrooms, which makes it difficult for administrators to employ creative teaching methods.

Additional comparisons with Asad's (2021) research showed that systemic problems like government inefficiencies in the distribution of educational resources frequently make resource constraints worse in poor nations like Uganda. Due to this, there are differences in education between rural and urban areas, with rural institutions suffering more than urban ones, as this study has shown. The absence of libraries, laboratories, and even basic classroom amenities combined with poor infrastructure makes it difficult for strategic leaders to operate in a classroom setting.

4.2.2.2 Teacher-Related Issues

Significant difficulties pertaining to teachers were also brought to light by the survey, such as excessive absenteeism rates, a lack of opportunities for professional development, and a shortage of trained teachers. These results are in line with those of Bosco (2017),

who noted comparable difficulties in Uganda's educational system. Bosco's study highlighted how attempts to enhance academic performance through strategic leadership are thwarted by poor teacher certification levels and frequent absence.

Previous study by Gumus et al. (2018) supports this result, demonstrating that effective school leadership requires constant teacher development programs to ensure educators are prepared to respond to changes in curriculum and teaching practices. This study found that teacher absenteeism and insufficient professional development programs diminish time spent in active learning environments, contributing to Uganda's poor academic performance. Furthermore, a lack of motivation, caused in part by low remuneration, was highlighted as a crucial factor impacting teacher commitment.

4.2.2.3 Curriculum and Technological Constraints

The low availability of ICT in Ugandan schools, in particular, was one of the study's main themes about technological limitations. Since many Ugandan schools lack even the most basic electronic infrastructure, strategic leaders find it challenging to implement cutting-edge teaching techniques, even as worldwide educational trends increasingly rely on technology to boost learning outcomes. Bett's (2021) research from Kenya confirms these results, pointing out that one major obstacle facing school administrators trying to update the classroom is a shortage of ICT resources.

Although the Ugandan government has attempted to equip schools with solar-powered computers, the impact of this initiative has been very little because of unequal resource distribution and a shortage of instructors with the necessary training to successfully use the technology (MOES, 2017). Thus, the results of this study support the findings of Gumus et al. (2018), who noted that in order to increase academic performance, strategic leadership in education must concentrate on removing technical hurdles.

4.2.3 Strategic Leadership Practices

4.2.3.1 Vision-Setting and Decision-Making

This study placed a lot of emphasis on the function that vision-setting and decision-making play in strategic leadership. School administrators were more inclined to put effective tactics into practice when they had a clear goal for their students' academic performance. This is in line with the theoretical framework presented by Hitt and Ireland (2011), which highlights the need for strategic leaders to have a compelling vision that can direct their organisations' long-term objectives.

Comparably, earlier research by Kitonga et al. (2016) showed that visionary leadership plays a critical role in coordinating the school's strategic goals with the more general educational objectives established by the community's expectations and governmental policies. In the context of this study, it was discovered that academic outcomes were improved for school administrators that collaborated with educators, parents, and students to create a common vision for academic achievement. Northouse (2016) has emphasised the importance of this cooperative decision-making process for strategic leadership, as it cultivates a sense of ownership among all parties involved.

4.2.3.2 Community Engagement and Stakeholder Involvement

The significance of community involvement in the achievement of strategic leadership was one of the study's original conclusions. According to this study, educators who actively engaged the community parents, local government, and other stakeholders were better at putting instructional ideas into practice that raised academic achievement. Prior research on the subject of community participation has been done by D'Amato, Henderson, and Florence (2009), who noted that stakeholder involvement is a crucial component of educational leadership.

Support from the community is essential in many Ugandan schools as a way to make up for the resource shortages brought on by tight government funding. To gather money for necessary resources, for instance, some schools rely on Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). This is consistent with Stanley's (2015) findings, which showed that strategic leaders are better able to handle resource challenges when they actively manage stakeholder relationships.

4.2.3.3 Professional Development for School Leaders

The significance of ongoing professional development for school leaders appeared as a constant issue throughout this study. Previous research by Gumus et al. (2018) shown that school leaders who receive ongoing strategic leadership training are better prepared to deal with the challenges of school management. In Uganda, professional development programs are frequently weak, resulting in a gap in school leaders' ability to implement long-term initiatives.

The results of this study demonstrated that school administrators who had taken strategic management courses were better at fostering collaborative learning environments and raising student achievement. The research conducted by Bett and Bett (2021) lends credence to this conclusion, stressing the value of professional development programs in giving leaders the tools they need to adjust to shifting educational environments.

4.2.3.4 Impact of Strategic Leadership on Student Outcomes

This study's main conclusion was the direct effect that strategic leadership has on students' academic achievement. The study found that schools with leaders that actively supported teacher cooperation, engaged the community, and created a positive learning environment typically had better student performance results. This is in line with the conclusions of

Simiyu (2013), who showed that enhanced academic performance occurs from strategic leadership when paired with sufficient resources.

On the other hand, academic achievement was poorer at schools whose leaders were unable to apply strategic leadership approaches because of a lack of resources or community involvement. This finding aligns with earlier research by Onyara (2013), who discovered that low-performing rural schools were more likely to have insufficient strategic leadership as compared to higher-performing urban schools. The results of this study, in summary, provide compelling evidence in favour of the claim that strategic leadership is essential to Ugandan primary and secondary schools' academic performance. Uganda is not alone in facing these difficulties; many developing nations also face them. These difficulties include inadequate teacher development, limited resources, and technical constraints. The report emphasises how crucial it is for school administrators to continue their professional development, to get more involved in the community, and to have enough resources available to them in order to successfully apply strategic leadership approaches.

In addition to highlighting areas where future research and policy efforts can concentrate to enhance educational outcomes in Uganda and other developing nations, this study adds to a broader knowledge of the function of strategic leadership in education by comparing its findings with those of published literature.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary, conclusions and the recommendations based on the findings of the study.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study highlights the crucial role of strategic leadership in improving the quality of education in Uganda's primary and secondary schools. It emphasizes the need for visionary leadership that focuses on long-term vision-setting, informed decision-making, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. The findings reveal that effective strategic leadership directly influences student academic performance and the overall success of educational institutions. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, insufficient training, and resistance to change hinder the effectiveness of leadership efforts. Despite government initiatives, student performance remains below expectations, particularly at the secondary level. The study advocates for enhanced leadership training tailored to Ugandan schools' specific needs and the development of a professional model for aspiring administrators. It underscores the importance of community engagement in boosting student motivation and performance. Ultimately, the study provides a roadmap for strengthening strategic leadership to drive educational improvements and achieve long-term goals in Uganda's educational system.

5.2 Conclusion

The exploration of various leadership models provides a comprehensive understanding of how leadership theories have evolved and been applied in educational contexts. These models reflect different approaches to managing schools and achieving educational goals, each with its unique focus and implications.

These leadership models offer various lenses through which educational leadership can be understood and practiced. Each model emphasizes different aspects of leadership, from managing daily tasks to inspiring and guiding long-term strategic change, highlighting the complexity and multifaceted nature of leadership in educational settings.

However Strategic leadership stands out as a superior management model in schools because it uniquely integrates and enhances other leadership approaches, ensuring a holistic and forward-thinking approach to education. While other models like teacher leadership, managerial leadership, curriculum leadership, and others have their strengths, strategic leadership provides a framework that combines these strengths to achieve long-term success.

In the complex and challenging educational landscape of Uganda, the role of strategic leadership cannot be overstated. This study has underscored the critical importance of strategic leadership in shaping the success and quality of education in both primary and secondary schools. In a country grappling with issues such as high dropout rates, inadequate resources, low completion rates, and resistance to change, the need for visionary and effective leadership is more urgent than ever. Educational leaders in Uganda are called upon to go beyond traditional administrative roles to become strategic managers who can anticipate challenges, make informed decisions, and set a clear vision for the future.

Strategic leadership, as explored in this study, is not merely about managing day-to-day operations; it involves setting a long-term vision, making decisions that align with overarching educational goals, and fostering a collaborative environment where all stakeholders teachers, students, parents, and the community work together towards common objectives. The findings from this research illustrate that the quality of strategic

leadership directly impacts the academic performance of students and the overall effectiveness of educational institutions. School leaders who demonstrate strong strategic leadership skills such as vision setting, teamwork, and decision-making are better equipped to create learning environments that support academic success and holistic development.

However, the study also reveals the numerous challenges faced by educational institutions in Uganda. The lack of resources, inadequate training for leaders, and systemic resistance to change are significant barriers that hinder the implementation of effective strategic leadership practices. Despite government initiatives like increasing teachers' salaries and establishing seed schools, the academic performance of students, particularly at the secondary level, remains below expectations. For instance, failure rates in the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examinations were alarmingly high, with 25% in 2021 and 29% in 2022. These statistics point to a broader issue within the educational system that strategic leadership alone cannot resolve without addressing these underlying challenges.

Considering the findings of this study it is assured and believed that strategic leadership holds the key to unlocking the potential of Uganda's educational institutions. By focusing on strategic elements such as vision-setting, decision-making, and teamwork, school leaders can create a more conducive environment for learning. Vision-setting provides direction and purpose, decision-making ensures that actions are informed and effective, and teamwork fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility among all stakeholders. These elements, when combined, create a robust framework for improving the quality of education and achieving better academic outcomes.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of community engagement in supporting strategic leadership. Regular collaboration between parents, teachers, and the broader community enhances student motivation and performance. The involvement of community members in educational initiatives not only provides additional resources and support but also helps to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

This study serves as a clarion call for the need to strengthen strategic leadership within Uganda's educational system. The evidence gathered from the participants school headmasters and directors demonstrates that strategic leadership is not just a theoretical concept but a practical necessity for achieving educational excellence. However, it is clear that more needs to be done to equip school leaders with the skills and knowledge they need to be effective strategic leaders. This includes ongoing professional development, tailored to the specific challenges faced by Ugandan educational institutions.

The development of a professional development model for aspiring administrators and managers is one of the crucial outcomes of this research. Such a model would address the specific needs of Ugandan schools and help to build the capacity of school leaders to implement strategic leadership practices effectively. By doing so, we can ensure that the next generation of educational leaders in Uganda is well-prepared to meet the challenges of the future and to drive continuous improvement in the quality of education.

To sum up, strategic leadership is indispensable for improving educational outcomes in Uganda. Effective leadership that emphasizes vision-setting, decision-making, and teamwork can significantly enhance the quality of education and contribute to the overall success of students. As Uganda continues to evolve and face new educational challenges, the role of strategic leadership will remain central to achieving long-term educational goals and ensuring that all students have access to quality and relevant education. This

study not only highlights the importance of strategic leadership but also provides a roadmap for how it can be strengthened and applied to drive positive change in Uganda's educational system.

Strategic leadership is the best management model for schools because it offers a comprehensive, integrated approach that aligns all aspects of school management with long-term goals. By incorporating the strengths of other leadership models while ensuring coherence, adaptability, and a focus on outcomes, strategic leadership provides school administrators with the tools needed to drive sustainable success. Given the complexities and demands of modern education, applying strategic leadership ensures that schools are well-positioned to meet current challenges and achieve academic excellence in the long term.

5.3 Key Implications for Enhancing Educational Leadership

The study's findings underscore the critical role of strategic leadership in enhancing academic performance across Ugandan schools, offering valuable insights for principals, policymakers, stakeholders, and researchers. School principals can refine their leadership practices by focusing on vision-setting, teamwork, and decision-making to foster academic excellence. Policymakers and the Ugandan government can leverage these insights to develop strategies that strengthen leadership practices through targeted training, policy adjustments, and resource allocation. The broader educational community, including teachers, parents, and the community, will benefit from improved learning environments that support higher academic achievement. Additionally, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between strategic leadership and student outcomes, providing a foundation for future research and guiding best practices in educational leadership.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance strategic leadership within Uganda's educational system:

The study recommends enhancing strategic leadership within Uganda's educational system by implementing comprehensive professional development programs tailored to the needs of school leaders, with a focus on vision-setting, decision-making, and teamwork. Strengthening partnerships between schools, parents, and the community is also crucial, as it fosters a more inclusive educational environment and collaborative problem-solving. To support these efforts, the study advocates for increased government funding, the provision of essential resources, and the exploration of partnerships with NGOs, private sectors, and international donors.

Additionally, a professional development model for aspiring leaders should be implemented, incorporating mentorship from experienced school leaders. Promoting a culture of continuous improvement through self-evaluation, peer reviews, and regular monitoring of leadership impact is essential, as is addressing systemic barriers like inadequate training and resistance to change through policy reforms. Emphasizing vision-setting and long-term planning is vital, with clear goals and detailed action plans to achieve educational objectives.

Finally, the study highlights the need for ongoing research and innovation in educational leadership, encouraging collaboration among academic institutions, educational organizations, and school leaders to identify and scale best practices across the country.

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Appendix

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TO HEAD TEACHERS AND DIRECTORS

Demographic Information

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Education:
4. Branch:
5. Professional seniority:

School Demography

1. Private or Public
2. Name of the school
3. When it was created,
4. How many pupils,
5. How many instructors
6. Other working staffs

Interview Questions

1. Regarding difficulties in ensuring quality education:
 - a. What are some of the biggest challenges you face in ensuring quality education in your school?
 - b. How do these challenges affect the overall learning experience of students?
 - c. Can you share any strategies or initiatives you've implemented to address these challenges?
2. Regarding methods and strategies to improve education quality:
 - a. What methods or strategies do you employ to enhance the quality of education provided in your school?
 - b. How do you assess the effectiveness of these methods or strategies in improving academic performance?
 - c. Are there any specific programs or initiatives that have been particularly successful in improving education quality?
3. Regarding community engagement and academic success:
 - a. Can you describe your involvement in engaging with the community to support academic success in your school?
 - b. How do you believe community engagement contributes to the academic achievements of students in your school?
 - c. Have you observed any specific examples where community engagement initiatives have positively impacted academic outcomes?
4. Regarding the impact of effective leadership:

- a. In your opinion, how does effective leadership contribute to the overall ability of schools to deliver quality education?
 - b. Can you provide examples of how your leadership style has positively influenced academic outcomes in your school?
 - c. How do you support and empower your staff to excel in their roles and contribute to the school's academic success?
- 5.** Regarding strategic leadership factors:
- a. How do you approach vision-setting within your school community?
 - b. Can you describe a recent decision-making process you led and its impact on education quality?
 - c. How do you foster collaboration among staff, students, and other stakeholders to enhance academic performance?