

Exploration of the factors influencing access to university education by students from rural secondary schools: A case study of Kasese District in Uganda

Asiati Mbabazi, Asiimwe Aisha and Adrian Mwesigye

Department of Education, Management and Administration of Kampala International University Uganda.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the factors influencing access to university education by students from rural secondary schools in Kasese District of Uganda. This research used a descriptive study design on a sample of 98 respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides and were analysed using frequencies and percentages. The results from this research revealed several factors that affected accessibility to university education such as parents level of income, students academic ability, the perceived ability of graduates to save, invest and start a business, the need to meet demands of modernization and value addition of graduates and self sponsorship. In conclusion, the results from this research indicated that academic ability and distance to the universities was the two major factors affecting accessibility to university education. This research recommends that students in rural secondary schools should be properly guided to improve their individual behaviour, social interactions and networks.

Keywords: Factor, access, university, education, students and Kasese

INTRODUCTION

Uganda's University education system has its origins in the early 1920s with the founding of Makerere as a technical college in 1922 to serve students from the British East African territories of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda [1, 2, 3, 4]. In 1970, the University of East Africa, of which Makerere College had been a constituent college since 1963, evolved into three fully-fledged independent universities (Makerere University in Uganda, University of Nairobi in Kenya and University of Dares salaam in Tanzania). Makerere University remained the only Public Unity until 1989 when Mbarara University of Science and Technology was established [5, 6]. Universities are further categorised into public and private. Public institutions are established by an Act of Parliament while private universities are chartered, licensed or unlicensed. Since 1988, the number of private universities in Uganda has grown from one to more than 42 Universities due to excess demand for higher education [7, 8, 9].

Initially, university education in Uganda was considered a public good - freely provided by government. However, since the late 1980s and early 1990s, increasing demand for higher education amidst declining budget allocations to public universities are among other reasons that created ideal conditions for establishment of private universities [10, 11]. Although Uganda has seen an increase of private (i.e. fees-paying) university students, majority who benefit are found in urban areas. All private universities offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees predominantly in the humanities, with a few institutions offering postgraduate programmes in the humanities and soft sciences. With the country's high population growth and the introduction of universal primary education and universal secondary education, the demand for higher education continues grow. In addition, the demand for higher education in Uganda is likely to increase as a result of such factors as

the increases in household incomes, the growing recognition of the role of higher education in national development and the expected high private returns to higher education [13,14].

In 1997, there was introduction of Universal Primary Education. Hence priority shifted to basic education. This led to decline in public support to higher education [15, 16]. As a result of this, there was deliberate move by government to encourage Public Universities to generate resources from private sources as well as encourage private sector to play an increasingly significant role in the provision of higher education. The government's reluctance to finance higher education has led to an increase in private expenditure on higher education and public institutions bidding to develop various mechanisms for generating funds from private households [17]. This means that most students have to pay for their university education as long as they can afford and have entry requirements. The state has reserved an annual 4,000 positions for government sponsorship of students admitted into the five public universities. The system is merit-based and students with the highest grade points are admitted for scholarship based on the individual requirements of the institutions and the

faculties where the students are to be based [18]. In most cases, such merited students come from urban and well facilitated schools and therefore leaving students from rural schools disadvantaged. In 2005/06 financial year, a new system was introduced primarily to redress the enrolment imbalance between sciences and the humanities in Uganda. In the new system, 75% of the 4000 government-sponsored are admitted on the basis of merit but are limited to subjects deemed crucial to national development, specifically in Science and Technology, Law, Performing Arts, and Economics [19]. The remaining 25% of the 4000 places is used to address equity gaps. A quota system was introduced for the best students in each district, for persons with disabilities, and for sports men and women that meet the minimum requirements of specific institutions and programmes. State scholarship therefore is highly competitive and mainly favours students from the higher socio-economic status whose parents can afford good secondary schools. This privileged group receives 'free' university education including tuition, accommodation, meals and other welfare costs [20].

Aim of the study

To explore factors influencing access to university education by students from

rural secondary schools in Kasese District.

Research question

- i. Which factors influence access to university education by

students from rural secondary schools?

Geographical scope

Kasese District is located along the equator. It is bordered by Kabarole District to the north, Kamwenge District to the east, Rubirizi District to the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. It is estimated that in 2012, the population of the district was approximately 747,800 people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [21]). There are 85 secondary schools

(22 Government aided, 33 private and with 30 under public-private partnership. There are 7 tertiary institutions (one university study centre and 6 colleges). Kasese District was chosen because of the researcher's experience with the teaching and learning environment, most teachers in secondary schools come from other districts other than Kasese itself.

Time scope

The study focused on students at the university who finished Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education between 2014 and 2016. These included university students in year

one up to the fourth year. This time period was chosen because such university graduates know the factors that determined their access to university education.

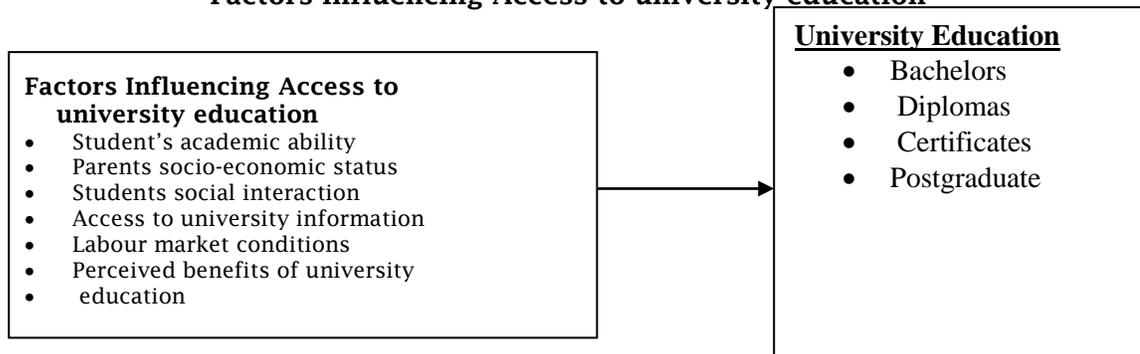
Significance of the study

The study might add more knowledge in the area of university education career management, financing and ensuring equity in access to university. The results of the study might be useful to schools and parents to improve on ways of career guidance for students. This is especially in choosing the university, the courses or programme to study. The recommendations may be used to stimulate policy debate among various education stakeholders in Kasese District on how to improve access to university education by students from rural secondary schools.

This eventually may help to identify solutions to the low rate of participation in university education by student from rural secondary schools in Kasese. The study might be used as a reference by the subsequent researchers who will come to study in the same area and under the same topic of access to university education. Study findings may be used by the community to understand some of the factors affecting students from rural secondary schools in attainment of university education.

Conceptual Framework

Factors Influencing Access to university education



(Source: Researcher, 2017 based on [17])

Figure 1: Conceptual frame work showing accessibility to university education by students from rural secondary schools

From figure 1, above access to university education is influenced by many factors. The framework considers access as ability of a student to join the university and acquire skills such as technical, human, design and conceptual skills that would enable him or her to live in elite and non-elite environment after study. When students access university education (i.e studying courses at degree, diploma or certificate level), it assumed that both students, parents or the family

and the community benefit from the outcomes of that education. This is because university education facilitates acquisition of skills and knowledge that increase productivity, efficiency and quality of life. This comes as a result of university education increasing the value of the graduates in the labor markets by getting well-paying jobs, earning high wages/salaries. Lack of access to university education by communities in Kasese District may result into; lack of trained professionals

that spearhead socio-economic sectors' growth. Lack of opportunities to access university education may lead to under or undeveloped human resources, limited savings and low standards of

living and loss of change associated with university education. This eventually leads to slow rate of modernization and development.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A descriptive study design entailing collection of qualitative data on the selected variables was used. A descriptive research design observes, describes and documents aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs [21]. Descriptive research design was used because the researcher was concerned with describing affairs in as far as

accessibility to university education of students from rural Kasese District was concerned. The data collection and analysis were concurrently done as suggested by [22]. The mixed method was used because data collection procedure involved two types (questionnaire and interviews).

Area of study

The study was carried out in Kasese District in South Western Uganda. The population of Kasese was 702,029 people. Of this 51.7% (363,233) were females and 48.3% (338,796) were males. The population growth rate in Kasese District in 2014 was 2.45%. There are 140,697 households in the district with a household size of 4.9 persons which is higher than the national average of 4.7. The rural population consists of 529,976 or 75.5%

of the population while the urban population is 24.5%. In Kasese District, there are different ethnic groups like Bakonzo, Batoro, Basongora, Bamba and Banyarwanda [23]. Kasese district was chosen as a study area due to the factor that it is located far away from the Capital City Kampala with no university. Therefore the research was wondering how students from such an area really access university education.

Population of study

The population of the study was 146 including 128 students at the university, 10 head teachers, 3 registrars and 3 deans of students and 2 officials from the Kasese District Education Office. The district has five constituencies namely; Bukonzo East (5 government aided secondary schools), Bukonzo West (4 Schools), Busongora North (10 schools), Busongora South (5 schools) and Kasese Municipality (3 schools). Thus, Busongora North with

10 government aided secondary schools became the sampled area because it had many government aided secondary schools. Due to time and cost constraints, Busongora North was also selected because the researcher found it convenient to carry out the study on part of the population that was more accessible. In these schools, the number of students at university in 2014, 2015 and 2016 was 128.

Sample size selection and sampling techniques

The sample population for the students comprised 113 sampled based on [24] table used for determining the sample size for a given population. Thus, the sample size is 113 respondents

including; 95 students at university, 10 head teachers, one D.E.O and one District Inspector of Schools, 3 registrars and 3 deans of students as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Population and the sample size selected for this study

Category of respondents	Population	Sample	Sampling technique
Students sent to university from ten rural secondary schools 2014, 2015 & 2017	128	95	Krejcie and Morgan table
Head teachers	10	10	Purposive sampling
University Dean of students	3	3	Purposive sampling
University Registrars	3	3	Purposive sampling
District Education Officials	2	2	Purposive sampling
Total	146	113	

Source: Head teachers of 10 secondary schools in Kasese District, 2017

Krejcie and Morgan tables were used to select a sample of 95 university students that studied from rural secondary school in Kasese district. The study also purposely selected 10 head teachers from Busongora North schools, 3 University Deans of Students and 3 Academic registrars, 2 District Education Officials due to their knowledge and experience in

interacting with students intending to join university education. In this case criterion purposive sampling was used where students at the university from Busongora North rural based secondary school were the focus. Criterion purposive sampling involves searching for cases or individuals that meet a certain criteria e.g have had a particular life experience as described by [24].

Data collection methods

The study collected data using interviews and document reviews. In-depth interviews were held with D.E.O, Inspector of schools, University Registrars and Deans of students from the three universities namely; Mountains of the Moon University,

Kampala International University (Western Campus) and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. The research chose the three universities based on (i) closeness to Kasese District (2) Private and public university.

Data collection instruments

Questionnaires

A self-administered questionnaire with mainly close and some open ended questions were used to collect data from students at the University hailing from Kasese District.

helped to assess the language clarity, ability to tap information from respondents, acceptability in terms of length and ethical consideration for clients. Supervisors were requested to rate the instruments in order to discover their validity. In order to establish content validity, results from the ratings were computed using the following formula.

Data quality control

Validity of instruments

To ensure validity of research instruments; pilot testing of copies of questionnaire was carried out in two schools of Kasese District. This

$$CVI = n/N$$

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of items in the questionnaire}}$$

Where: n = number of items rated as relevant

N = Total number of items in the instrument

This resulted into a Content Validity Index of 80%, meaning that the instrument was valid. Data collected was cross checked while still in the field to ensure that all questions were answered and contradictory information was removed.

Data collection procedure

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Post Graduate Directorate department of Educational Management and Administration to introduce her to the field. Afterwards, the researcher did a pilot testing of the research tools to check content validity. After corrections of any inconsistencies, the researcher went straight to the universities selected to ask the students at the university hailing from Kasese. In the field, the researcher introduced herself and purpose of the

research to the different categories of respondents. The researcher distributed the questionnaires and there after conducted interviews with the respective categories. At the end of each day, the researcher did preliminary analysis of data gathered in order to check for inconsistencies

Data Management

Data processing

Data from interviews guides was group to mark the underlying ideas where similar kinds of data were grouped together to form categories and themes according to (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This was done by picking out ideas, concepts and themes into categories. Finally, triangulation was used to validate data from different sources and to corroborate findings. On the other hand, data from questionnaires was coded.

Data analysis

During data collection, at the end of each day, the researcher did preliminary data analysis for interviews conducted in order to check for inconsistencies. After field work, data from the questionnaire was read and reread to understand participants' perspectives about research issues. It was then entered into the excel sheet and coded according to objectives.

Then the responses were tabulated to create frequencies and generate percentages. The frequency tables, graphs and charts were used to present data and inferences made about the general population. Secondary data from the district and university administrators was useful in validating some of the respondents' responses.

Ethical considerations

The main ethical considerations were voluntary participation, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and privacy of the respondents. The rights and the welfare of the respondents were protected. The researcher tried to minimize risks to respondents as much as possible. In

relation to holding interviews, the researcher felt the most important ethical considerations was to make clear instructions to the respondents that participation was entirely be voluntary, free to withdraw from the interview at any time and were kept strictly confidential by the researcher.

RESULTS

Response Rate

The researcher anticipated to collect data from 113 respondents including 95 for the questionnaire survey and 18 for the interviews. However, complete data was collected from 80

questionnaires and 16 interviews making a total response of 96. The response rate was as presented in table 2.

Table 2 Questionnaire response rate for the study

Instrument	Sample	Reached Respondents	Response rate
Questionnaire	95	80	84%

The data in table 2 shows that the questionnaire survey data was obtained from 80 (84%) respondents out of the originally selected 95 university students. This response rate was

considered sufficient because [25] proposes that a response rate of 50% and above is acceptable in social research surveys.

Category of the respondents

The researcher contacted different categories of respondents. This was done in order to get different views

from different people that have interfaced with university education as presented below.

Table 3: Category of respondents for the questionnaire

Category	Male	Female	Total
Students at the University	51	29	80
Percentage	64	36	100

Source: Primary data, 2017

Data was collected from 80 university students from Mountains of the Moon, Kampala International University-Western Campus and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. Table 3, shows questionnaire respondents based on gender. The results showed that the large category of university students hailing from Kasese District are males 51(64%) with

few or nearly half females 29(36%). This suggested that the larger percentage of the respondents were males. However, despite the males being the larger percentage, the data collected was representative of both gender groups because the number of females was equally high and they effectively participated in the study.

Table 4 Category of respondents for interviews

Category	Male	Female	Total
Head teachers	8	2	10
Academic registrar	3	0	3
Dean of students	3	0	3
District Education Officials	2	0	2
Total	16	02	18
Percentage	89	11	100

Source: Primary data, 2017

From table 4, results show that most head teachers and administrators are

males 16 (89%) compared to females 02(11%).

Age distribution of respondents

An analysis on the age of the respondents was also done. The researcher considered the age level of the respondents in order to identify who participated in the study and the results are in the Table 5 here under.

Table 5 Age Distribution of University students

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
20 - 24Years	27	33.75
25 - 30 Years	43	53.75
31 - 35 Years	10	12.5
Total	80	99.63

Source: Primary 2017

From the Table 5, with regard to age groups of the respondents in years, the results showed that the is a good number 27(33.75%) of university students and a larger percentage 43(32.8%) was of the respondents who were between 25-30 years followed by 10(12.5%) who were above 31 years, This means that most of the respondents were above 20 years and therefore could easily reason on issues concerning university accessibility.

Table 6 Age distribution of Interview respondents

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
36 - 40 Years	8	44.44
41 - 45 Years	10	55.55
Total	18	99.99

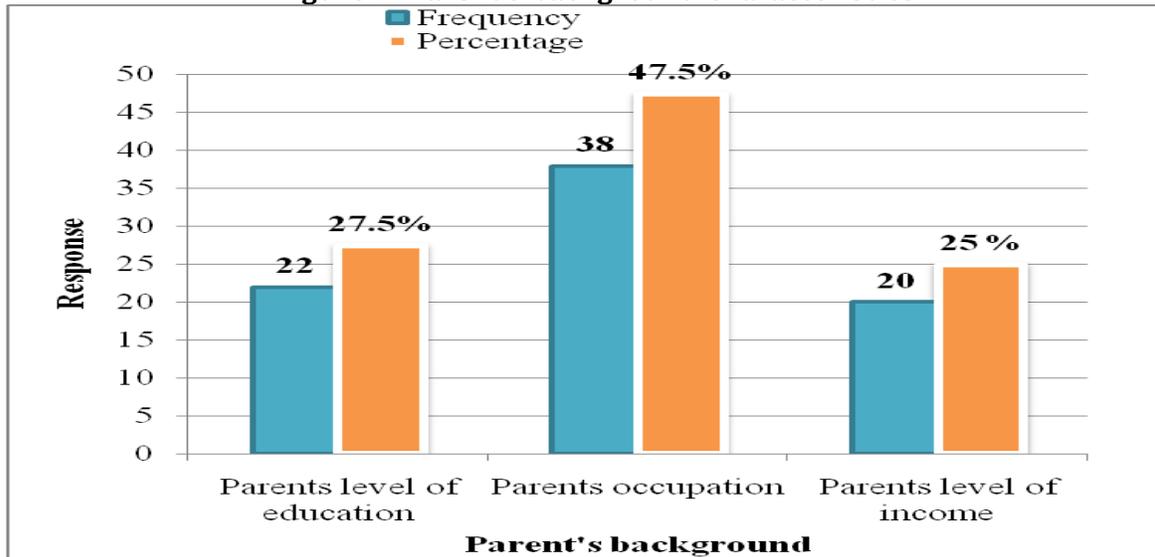
Source: Primary data, 2017

The results in Table 6 indicate that the respondents in the age group of age group 36-40years were 8(44.44%), 41-45years were 10(55.55%), 26-30years. The results indicate that all the respondents were of competent age to answer the research questions and therefore this gave the researcher to consider the solicited views as valid and authentic in relation to the stud

Parents’ background factors that influence students’ access to university education

There were different factors regarding education, parents’ occupation and parents’ level of income as illustrated below. These among others include parent level of

Figure 2: Parent’s background characteristics



The figure 2 indicates that parents level of education is one of the factors that influence students access to university education as indicated by 22(27.5%) of the respondents. Echoed by the head teachers, it was revealed that when parents’ education is high, there is likelihood of their children aspiring for university education. However, in most cases when the parents’ level of education is low, there are low chances of the child to aspire for university education. Thus, in Kasese students whose parents had finished at least ordinary certificate, their parents struggle to ensure their children attain university education although many students do not make it on government sponsorship. At the same time 38(47.5%) of the student respondents indicated that parents’ level of income is the major factor that may lead or fail one from attaining university education. Interview responses supplemented questionnaire results that when the parents have high income, they have the ability to put

their children in a school with good advanced level sections and therefore these students have higher chances of getting required points for entry into the university on government sponsorship. On the other hand, when parent’s income is limited and the parent is always struggling to get schools fees, there is high likelihood that the student will end up in a school where there is poor performance at advanced level. Such schools are in most cases found in rural areas. Another group of students 20(25%) also indicated that parents occupation matters. This was supplemented by the interview responses which expressed that if the parent is employed or is working in a good company or government, there is likelihood that his/her child will go to the university because such parents are able to plan for their children’s future. Such parents may also be informed of the available university courses, the kind of university and therefore able to compare notes. On the other hand,

parents who are not sure of their survival and do not have stable occupations, are more likely to fail to send their children in universities because they may not be certain of

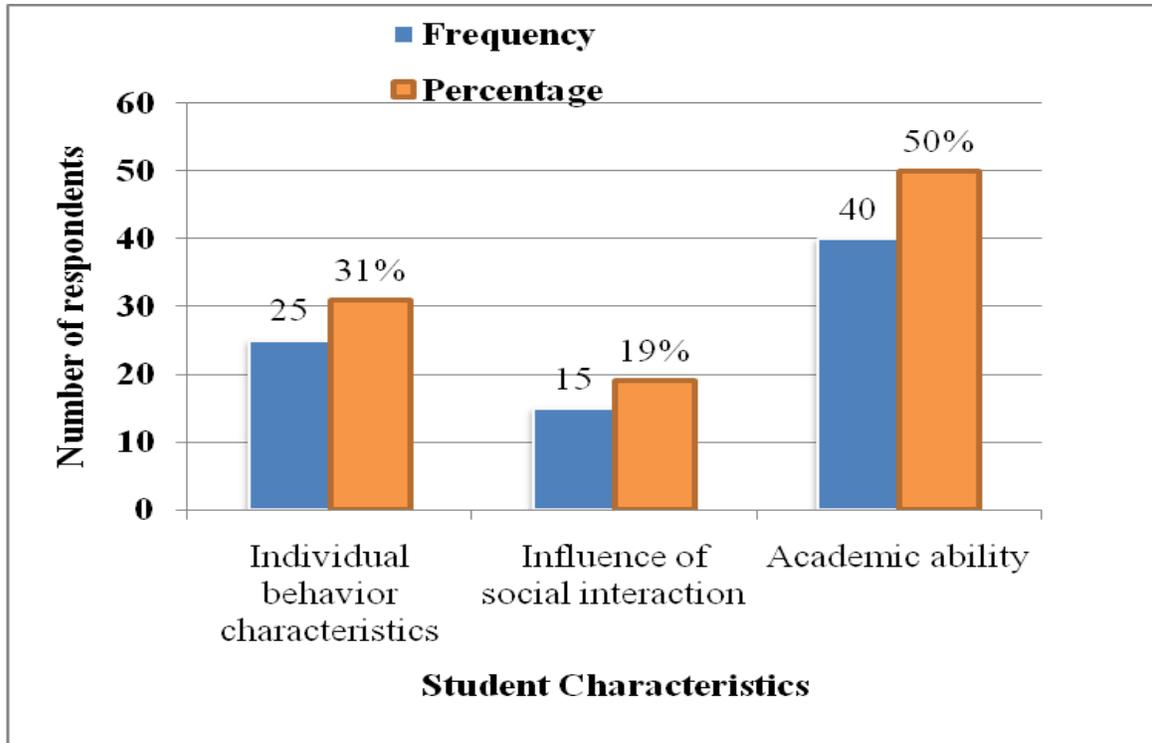
their employment or livelihood. Thus students whose parents have unstable occupations are more likely to fail to go to the university.

Student characteristics that prevent access to university

The respondents were asked to identify and assess students' characteristics

that may influence one to attain university education.

Figure 3: Student characteristics that influence access to university education



Source: Primary data, 2017

From the figure 3, there are individual behavior characteristics of the student 25(31%) that influence access to university education. These among others include students desire to attain a certain level of education and undertake a preferred course. There are students who prefer sciences over Arts subjects and therefore will work hard and continue promising their parents and reminding them that they will take such course, a verbatim from one of the head teachers.

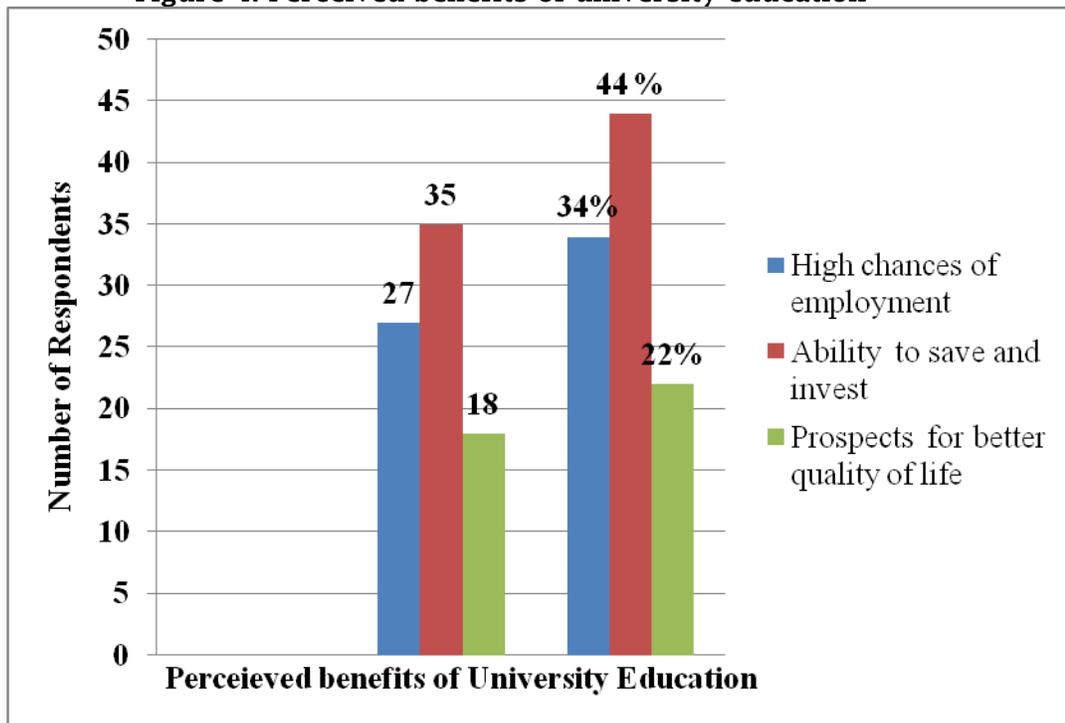
The choice of high school studied in may also determine the university attended. Students from certain high schools tend to prefer one university or

institution over the other; for instance, students in one of the secondary schools interfaced with normally end up taking short courses in nursing at Buhinga and Kagando Hospital. Again, 15(19%) of the respondents also indicated that the degree of social interactions with students who have had university education may also determine whether one can join university education or not. This statistic was supported by interview responses in that students waiting to join university education when the interact with university graduates may get the right information as prospective students. Such students may invite

their fellow students to go for university exhibitions, inform them of any university sponsorships or fellowships. On the other hand, students in communities with limited social interactions are likely to miss out on university opportunities. This means that students in rural areas are likely to miss access to the university due to lack of exposure to useful information. The majority of the respondents 40 (50%) indicated that students' academic

ability is one of the major determinant factor for one to access university education. Discussions with head teachers revealed that students from their schools have academic ability to perform better but in most cases, these students are limited by factors like moving long distances moved especially day scholars, limited facilitation with relevant books to consult during their individual learning periods.

Figure 4: Perceived benefits of university education



Source: Primary data, 2017

From Figure 4, there is a wide range of benefits that are gained from attaining university education. These among others include; high chances of employment, greater ability to save and invest and prospects for better quality of life. According to respondents' views, 27(34%) indicated that people go for university education because of the prospects for employment after the graduation. Views from interviews revealed that people with university education have chance for employment since university education is more demanded and therefore, likelihood of getting better pay. This is a perception generally held in the community as

university graduates in past two decades would get jobs immediately. However, the trends have changed instead students who have studied vocational studies such as tailoring; hair dressing, carpentry and joinery are the ones that get immediate employment. On the contrary, one head teacher had this to say; Although, university education is desired, what is important now days is to get something that can give money for survival. We have seen many university graduates who have failed to get jobs. Therefore why should one go for the university education when those with degrees are languishing here in the community?

Secondly, the participants in the study indicated that they prefer to join university education because, university graduates have greater ability to save and invest 35 (44%) e.g the ability to start a business and run it successfully. Views from the interviews indicated that university graduates come with various skills, knowledge and exposure. Contrary to this, most businesses run by less educated are likely to collapse before their first anniversary and when business owners die, the entire business collapses. This means that many parents would like to

have their students join the university in hope of gaining skills that will enable them start and run businesses successfully. In another development, 18(22%) of the respondents showed that they joined university education due to expected prospects for better quality of university graduate such as good health, hygiene homes, good environments. Thus, parents and students may pursue university education hoping for better life after graduation and for the rest of their lives.

Labour market conditions that influence access to university education by students from rural secondary schools

There are also labour market conditions that have determined the demand for

university education as illustrated in the table.

Table 5: Labor market conditions

Labor market conditions	Frequency	Percentage
The need to acquire knowledge and skills to face problems of 21 st century	18	22
The need for modernization/advancement	20	25
The need to increase value in the labor market	27	34
Influence of increasing demand for university education	15	19
Total	80	100

Source: Primary data, 2017

From the above table 5, 18(22%) of the respondents indicated that they wished to acquire knowledge and skills to face problems of 21st century. Discussions with interview respondents showed that this demand such as ability to use computer, internet and Information Communication Technology generally for business, innovations and start up a business that may earn one an income, need for structured system for a business, cutthroat competition, survival for the fittest. One head teacher noted that: These days one has to work hard and use different means to survive and therefore, I believe when

one has university education, will be able to manoeuvre life as the world has become so competitive. Today the world has become digitalized a reason why 20(25%) of the respondents showed that they would like to join university education in order to meet modernization needs such as computer literacy, being informed of e-commerce and e-business and how they operate. Today we are living in a global village and therefore everyone must be informed of what is taking place in the world. For instance, one has a million customers on just a tab of his /her phone while using whatsapp, facebook,

SMSing, blogs, or just having a website among others. Thanks for the coming of this technology but when you are not exposed like university graduate; you may not use some of these services and more. A verbatim from university registrar. Again, another 27(34%) of the respondents also indicated that there is increasing value of university graduates. Responses from the interviews held with head teachers showed that as the world changes, students at the university are taught different things happening in the world ranging from politics, economy, business, environment, ethics, medical and technology. Therefore, the university graduate will be all round

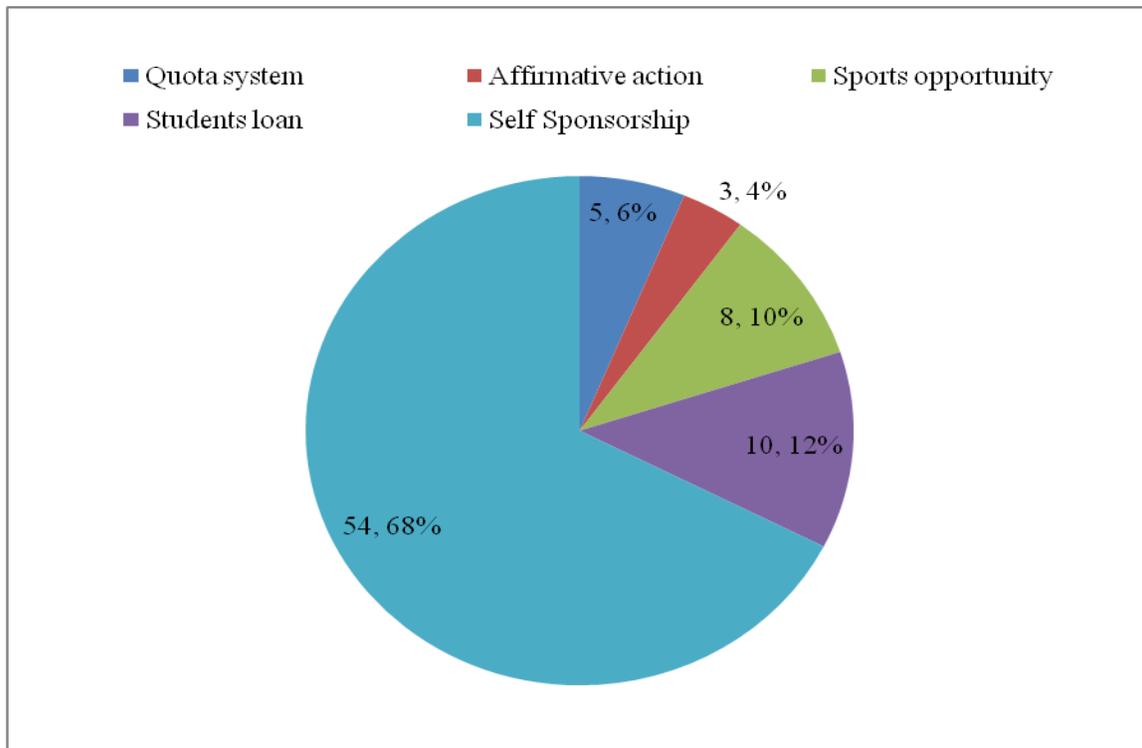
and therefore able to innovate and explore anything. Though, this however depends on the assertiveness of the graduate. Thus, most students would wish to access university education in order to improve on the value or worth. In an interview with one head teacher, he indicated that the world expands into manufacturing, business and technology; there is increasing demand for university education in every country. Thus, 15(19%) of the respondents preferred university education in order to meet this growing demand in industries, banking and finance, petroleum, conservation versus development as well emergency of new diseases.

Financing mechanisms that influence access to university education

To explore other factors that influence access to university education, the researcher also sought views of the

respondents on the financing mechanisms that exist in Uganda.

Figure 6: Pie chart showing Financing mechanisms that influence access to university education



Source: Primary data, 2017

At least 5(6%) of the respondents indicated that one of the financing

mechanism for university education was the quota system where every

district is given a number of students that are endorsed to the public universities. Kasese district sends 5 students on quota system every year to public universities according to the Kasese District (Chairman LC5). However, it was indicated that selecting students on a quota system was just a drop in the ocean. It was noted that many students apply for the quota system but only a handful of students is taken on the quota system. This means that many students have inspirations to access university education but cannot get. Also 3(6%) of the respondents indicated their knowledge of the affirmative action policy which normally favours the students with disabilities. These students are endorsed by District Union of People with Disability (PWDs) and recommended by National Union of Persons with Disability and forwarded public universities. According to the District Education Officer of Kasese district, these students must have two principal passes or simply six points. However, students with disabilities who normally benefit are those who study in urban schools and some of those that come from Kasese may benefit but the information may not easily be accessed. Again, 8(10%) of the respondents also indicated another financing mechanism which the government and some

private universities for university education is sponsorship of students who excel in sports. This option has so far benefited three students from Kasese District in Athletics sports. Another 10(12%) of the respondents showed that students loan has been introduced as a financing mechanism and if this option is continued, it would increase many students from Kasese District to access university education. The Chairman LC5 Kasese District had this to say though the students' loan leads some students to access university education, it puts a burden on the parents and somehow the policy is skewed to the poor. Why should children of the rich who study in good schools be government sponsored and the poor students are burdened with students' loan. The government should look into the harmonization of this policy. The above statement signifies that though the student loan may enable one access university education, but may as well be a problem. Besides, it favours students taking science courses and tends to follow the quota system. There were also 54(68%) of the students who indicated that they know self - sponsorship as main mechanism in which students access education at the university. It is this kind of financing that is common for students from rural areas like Kasese District.

DISCUSSION

The results about sampled demographic characteristics show that male respondents were the majority while age groups of 25 - 30 years were the majority and students at the university. The study triangulated views from different categories of respondents

Parents background factors that influence access to university education

The descriptive analysis of parents' background factors such as parents' level of education, parents' occupation and parents' level of income indicated that parents level of income has strong influence on students access to university education. Thus parents with high income, have the ability to put their children in schools with good advanced level sections and therefore

giving authenticity of the data as well as validity. The majority respondents were males because in most cases parents prefer to give priority for higher education to male child than girl child.

these students have higher chances of getting required points for entry into the university on government sponsorship. On the other hand, when parent's income is limited and the parent is always struggling to get schools fees, there is high likelihood of failing to raise required entry points. This finding realms with [20] that, the state reserves 4,000 positions annually

for students admitted into the five public universities for whom the government provides scholarships. The system is merit based. Students with the highest grades are admitted with scholarships based on the individual requirements of the institutions and the faculties where the students are to be based. Further findings indicated that parents' level of education is one of the factors that influence students access to university education. When, parents' education is high, there is likelihood of their children aspiring for university education. However, in most cases when the parents' level of education is low, there are low chances of the child to aspire for university education. The above finding argument [25] finding that in many African societies, culture and education have always occupied a very central place in the formation of the individual, his or her socialization and overall progress of collective group. Traditionally, learning and culturalization were considered continuing processes that took place from birth until death with the family unit, extended family, the village and the entire community participating.

Student' characteristics that influence access to university for students from rural secondary schools

The finding shows student characteristics like; individual behavior of the student, social interactions and academic ability influence access to university education. This is because students who like studying will decide their line of study either Arts or Science courses and will put in efforts during study. This means that a combination of these individual characteristics will influence access to university education. The degree of social interactions of a student with graduates who have had university education may also determine whether one can join university education or not. This because university graduates give the right information to prospective students. Graduates normally invite students who aspire for university education to go for university exhibitions, inform them of any

This therefore means that parents with low education levels tend to have strong belief in culture.

Findings also indicated that parents' occupation matters. When the parent is employed or is working in a good company or government, there is likelihood that his/her child will go to the university because such parents are able to plan for their children's future. Such parents may also be informed of the available university courses, the kind of university and therefore able to compare notes. On the other hand, parents who are not sure of their survival and do not have stable occupations, are more likely to fail to put their children in universities because they may not be certain of their employment or livelihood. This finding is related to what [26] found out that lower status within the family structure, lower perceived social value, exacerbated by general economic constraints and inadequate educational structures make girls' education, particularly higher education, appear less profitable than that of boys hence, such problems become even worse in rural areas.

university sponsorships or fellowships. On the other hand, students in communities with limited social interactions such as rural secondary schools are likely to miss out on these opportunities [25].

The majority of the respondents indicated that students' academic ability is one of the factors that determine access to university education. This is because students in rural communities may have academic ability but because of studying in rural secondary schools may not be academic giants. This means that most students from rural Kasese may not generate the required points at the university. This finding is consistent with human capital theory which predicts that holding other factors constant, myopic people are less likely to go to college than forward-looking people, and that

most college students are young [26]. Participation in higher education is restricted to the more capable students, who also happen to be more productive. The type of secondary school that students attend may determine how likely the student is to enroll in higher education [27]. The

Perceived benefits of university education

The study also explored perceived benefits of university education by students from rural secondary schools as one way that influence access to university education. The majority of indicated that they joined university because university graduates have greater ability to save, invest and ability to start a business and run it successfully. This is because university graduates get out of the university with various skills and knowledge and exposure. Thus, parents and students may pursue university education hoping for better life after graduation and for the rest of their lives. This finding supplements [29] argument that

Labour market conditions that influence access to university education

It was also found out in the study that most students access university education in order to meet modernization needs such as computer literacy, e-commerce and e-business and globalization and due to increasing value of university graduates. University graduates tend to be multi-skilled in world issues ranging from politics, economy, business, environment, ethics, medical and technology. This results in innovation and exploration of many things depending on the assertiveness of the graduate. Other labour market reasons for accessing university education were the need to acquire knowledge and skills to face problems of 21st century 15(23%) moderately influence access to university education. Such problems include: ability to use computer, internet and ICT generally for business, innovations and start up a business that may earn one an income, need for structured system for a business, cut-throat competition, survival for the

direction of this effect varies, however, between countries and with the structure of the educational system. The social status of the neighbourhood where the high school is located has a positive effect on youngsters' attendance of higher education institutions [28].

education facilitates the acquisition of new skills and knowledge that increase productivity. This increase in productivity frees up resources to create new technologies, new businesses, new wealth eventually resulting in increased economic growth. Therefore most parents support their students to access university education with a hope that they will live better life after university education when they get a job. However, it should be noted that nowadays there are many university graduates and therefore there is strong competition for jobs both in private and public institutions.

fittest. This finding is consistent with human capital concept that individuals acquire skills and knowledge to increase their value in the labor markets. It is said that education facilitates the acquisition of new skills and knowledge that increase productivity. This increase in productivity frees up resources to create new technologies, new businesses, new wealth eventually resulting in increased economic growth. Also higher education contributes to economic growth, efficiency, productivity and to quality of life although it is expensive to attain in Africa. However, unemployment rates increase with the level of educational attainment. The unemployment rates increase with high levels of education. University education leads to individual benefits like better employment prospects, high salaries and greater ability to save and invest. These benefits may result into better health and improved quality of life [29].

Financing mechanisms that influence access to university education

The findings of the study also showed that there are many financing mechanisms that influence access to university education such as quota system, affirmative action, sports, students loan and self sponsorship. The major financing mechanism that has enabled students from rural secondary schools in Kasese District Access University was self sponsorship though all the other financing mechanisms exist in the district. Although, the students loan has been introduced as a financing mechanism it was criticized for continued widening

of poverty gap since majority of beneficiaries come from poor backgrounds while at the same time, it favours students taking science courses and tends to follow the quota system. The above finding therefore contradicts the statement that 25% of the 4000 places offered on government sponsorship are used to address equity issues yet state sponsorship favours students who come from families with higher socio-economic status whose parents can afford good secondary schools [30].

CONCLUSION

There are many factors that affect access to university education by students from rural secondary schools, however, students' academic ability, ability of graduates to save, invest and start a business, need to meet demands

of modernization and value addition of graduates, and self sponsorship were some of the strongest factors that influence access to university education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should consider revising the policy of admission if access to university is to be increased for students from rural secondary schools. This should be done by either lowering entry points from rural secondary schools or simply saying that government sponsorship is for students from such and such schools given the criteria. In other words, the schools should be graded so that students from

first world schools should pay for themselves at the university because in most cases such students already come from wealthier families or well to do parents. The government should endeavour to improve the education standards in rural schools by improving teachers' motivation through accommodation and other social amenities.

REFERENCES

1. Adima, S. (2017) *Rwenzori High School Performance profile at S.4 and S.6 Exams from 2010-2016*. Unpublished report.
2. Africa America Institute (2015) *State of education in Africa report*. A report on the progress, opportunities and challenges confronting the African education sector
3. Africa Higher Education Collaboration (2008). *Improving equity and access to higher education in Africa*. Available at <http://www.cies.org/Programs/AHEC/>
4. Amin, M. (2005) *Social Science research: Conception, methodology and analysis*. Kampala
5. Atchoarena, D., & Gasperini, L. (2003). *Education for rural development: Towards new policy responses*. Rome Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
6. Alshenqeeti, H. (2014) *Interviewing as data collection method*. A Critical review sciedu press
7. Bailey, T., Cloete, N., & Pillay, P. (2011) *Universities and*

- economic development in Africa: Tanzania and University of Dar es Salaam case study.* Cape Town: Centre for Higher Education Transformation.
8. Banya, K. (2001) *Sub-Saharan Africa: The State of public higher education and emergence of private sector universities*, Florida International University, USA
 9. Basaza, N. G. (2006). *Distance education and realistic teacher education pedagogy in Uganda: Impact of an ICT-based learning environment*, PhD Thesis, Makerere University, Kampala Uganda
 10. Basaza, G.N., Milman, N.B., & Wright, C.R. (2010). *The challenges of implementing distance education in Uganda.* A case study of International Review of Research in open and distance learning Vol 2 (2): 256-276
 11. Becker, G. (1992). *Human Capital and the Economy. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 136(1): 85-92.
 12. Bernard, H.R. (2002) *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* 3rd Alta Mira Press; Walnut Creek, CA:
 13. Bigogo, G. (2017) The Budget Conference Background paper, Education Sector Review Kasese District. Unpublished report
 14. Brigitte, B., & Zhao, J. (2000) *University Education: Recent Trend sin Participation, Accessibility and Returns.* Statistics Canada Catalogue No 81-003. Education Quarterly Review, 2000 6(4).
 15. Cowen, R. (2014). *Ways of Knowing, Outcomes and 'Comparative Education': Be Careful What You Pray For.* Comparative Education 50(3), 282-301.
 16. Chan, J. (2007). *Between Efficiency, Capability and Recognition: Competing Episteme in Global Governance Reforms.* Comparative Education 43(3), 359-376.
 17. Checchi, D. (2000) *Does Educational Achievement Help to Explain Income Inequality.* Seminar paper, University of Milan Italy.
 18. Council of Ontario Universities (2012) *Course information.* downloaded from <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/ascp/documents/CourseInformationForStudentsAugust2012.pdf>
 19. Cresswell, J.W., & Plano, V.L. (2011) *Designing and conducting mixed method research.* 2nd Sage; Thousand Oaks, Canada
 20. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2017). *Statistical abstract.* Retrieved from http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/2017Statistical_%20Abstract.pdf
 21. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2017). *Statistical abstract.* Retrieved from http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/2017Statistical_%20Abstract.pdf
 22. Cutright, M., Fossey, R., & Niwagaba, L. (2008). *Challenges and opportunities for higher Development in Africa.*
 23. Ddumba, S. (2013) Vice Chancellor 63rd Graduation Speech at Makerere University Kampala Uganda
 24. Duloc, H.L. (1993) *Research Design: Descriptive research.* Journal of pediatric oncology nursing 10 (4), 93-98.
 25. Lawless, J. (2009) *The Advantages and Disadvantages of attending rural and urban*

- middle Schools*. Master's Thesis in Education, Ohio University.
26. Kwesiga, J.C. (1993) *Access of Women to Higher education in Uganda: Analysis of Inequalities, barriers and determinants*, Kampala Uganda.
 27. King, K., McGrath, S., & Rose, P. (2007). *Beyond the basics: Education and Training out of Poverty*. In *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27 (4)
 28. Knight, J. (2009). *Financing access and equity in higher education. Global perspectives on Higher education*
 29. Obwona, M., & Ssewanyana, S.N (2007) *Development impact of higher education in Africa*. *Human Resources*, 12(3), 285-307.
 30. Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). *Determining sample size for research activities*. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30,607 -610.