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Original Article

Misuse of instructional time and its effect on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Mpigi district, Uganda

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Mpigi District.

The purpose of the study was to examine the misuse of instructional time and its impact on the academic achievement of students in secondary schools in the Mpigi district, central Uganda. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The study involved 20 secondary schools in the Mpigi district, where 7 secondary schools were purposively sampled to participate in the study due to their significant role in generating in-depth information on examining the misuse of instructional time and students' academic achievement. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select 7 headteachers, 7 deputy headteachers, 7 directors of studies, 36 teachers, and 53 students to partake in the study. Interviews, focused group discussions and observation guides were used for information gathering. Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. The study concluded that teachers and students misuse instructional time in secondary schools of Mpigi. The academic achievement of learners is below the expectations of the stakeholders in secondary schools of the Mpigi district. Misuse of instructional time negatively impacts the academic achievement of students in the Mpigi district secondary schools. The study recommended that school administrators should regularly monitor and supervise both teachers and students in schools to ensure effective use of instructional time. School administrators should also organise seminars for teachers to train them on how to use the instructional time effectively, thereby enhancing the academic achievement of students in secondary schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Education around the world is perceived as the golden foundation on which all countries rely for sustainable development. As a result, developing countries all over the world have based on education to advance and elevate human resources to come up with a holistic individuals needed for the country transformation through obtaining a globally competitive workforce with techniques and skills relevant to the development paradigm (Hysa and Jakupi, 2024). This has encouraged the third world countries to restructure education systems through the effective use of instructional time, such as beginning and ending instruction on time, utilising learning resources and administering students' tasks effectively with the intended aim of acquiring skilled and trained labour responsible for the nation's development. It is through education that the underdeveloped nations are gradually escaping from poverty after acquiring trained persons who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for national growth (Oranga, Obuba and Nyakundi, 2020). Education around the world is looked at as a fundamental human right, and it's vital for developing a person's potential in all aspects, like talents, mental and physical abilities, which enables individuals to participate fully in their societies while achieving the nation's success (Zendeli, 2017). It is a milestone in realising global targets for Sustainable Development Goal number four of 2030, which aims to skill the skilling of workforce with the essential techniques required for the development of all nations in the universe, United Nations (UN 2024). Misuse of instructional time negatively affects academic achievement.

Therefore, quality education for all individuals worldwide can only be achieved through effective use of instructional time in secondary schools, which favours better students' academic achievement, especially at the end-of-term and year assessment (Oggenfuss and Wolter 2017).

African countries have spearheaded education as a major strategy for uplifting all persons at the continent from poverty through financing education with big chunks of money that has enabled secondary schools to improve on the effective use of instructional time such as begins and end instruction on time, utilizes learning resources and administers students' task which has sharpened the quality of human resources with skills and techniques required for the nation growth (Gruijters, Abango & Casely-Hayford, 2023). For instance, in Nigeria, the government put tremendous effort towards investing in human capital by introducing a policy of free secondary education under the program of Universal Basic Education (UBE) with the aim of acquiring a trained workforce essential for sustainable national development (Evans-Obina and Ndieze, 2017). Similarly, in Egypt, the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE) covers all costs for secondary education, making it free to all people in the country. This provides open opportunities to all individuals for acquiring skills relevant to self-sustainability and country growth (Begue-Aguado, 2022). This was followed by a call of African union towards the African ministries in charge of education and training in terms of their ability to formulate plans and implement policies to ensure and encourage the development of secondary

education in various forms including the effective use of instructional time such as begins and end instruction on time, utilizes learning resources and administers students' task to enable learners gain better academic achievement especially in the end of term and year assessment, African Union (AU, 2015). Defrancesco (2016) stated that effective use of instructional time in secondary education helps learners to attain better academic achievement, especially at the end-of-term and year assessment. Students taught with a quality utilisation of instructional time perform better than their counterparts who learn in a poor and misused instructional time environment. Wedel (2021) opined that well-addressed instructional time greatly helps learners to achieve good academic grades in secondary schools. Therefore, stakeholders in secondary schools need to fight against the misuse of instructional time and promote the effective use of instructional time to enable learners to acquire quality academic achievement.

Instruction time is the amount of time during lesson periods in which learners receive instruction from a classroom teacher within a school environment (Ahmadi, 2021). In addition, Instructional time plans involve the need to get the best academic achievement out of students within the available learning period (Merritt, 2016). Instructional time management strategies, among others, include: begins and ends instructions on time, effectively utilises learning resources, and administers students' tasks (Ayeni, 2020). In the same issue, Defrancesco (2016) emphasises that effective instructional time helps learners to attain better academic achievement and misuse of instructional time hinders better academic achievement. In relation to the above, prioritisation of instructional time makes students' learning enjoyable (Jezz and Wassmer, 2013). Therefore, administrators should ensure that teachers effectively use instructional time to help students attain better academic achievement.

In the same line, an increase in the misuse of instructional time has also been found as a factor that influences students' academic achievement (Long, 2014). Similarly, Cattaneo, Oggenfuss, and Wolte (2017) revealed that misuse of instructional time in the teaching process hurts the academic achievement of students. In rhyme with, Wedel (2021) found that there is a statistical relationship between instructional time and students' academic achievement. Also, Lopez-Agudo and Marcenoro-Gutierrez (2022) corroborated that instructional time has a significant impact on the academic achievement of students. Therefore, administrators and teachers should effectively use instructional time in lessons to enable learners to perform better in academics.

In the same view, Ummuhan (2019) noticed that instructional time has an impact on the academic achievement of learners. Again, Ahmadi (2021) also stated that students who are taught with effective utilisation of instructional time in Afghanistan perform better than students taught with ineffective and misused instructional time. In rhyme with, Rivkin and Schiman (2015) emphasised that instructional time has a significant impact on students' academic achievement. In addition, Burgess and Taylor (2022) confirmed that misuse of instructional time influences students' academic achievement. This was re-echoed by Osei-Owusu *et al.* (2018), who emphasised that misuse of instructional time affects students' academic achievement. Therefore, administrators need to support teachers to effectively use instructional time to help learners obtain better academic achievement.

It has been experienced in the region of East Africa that misuse of instructional time, such as beginning and ending instruction on time, utilising learning resources, and administering students' tasks negatively affect the academic achievement of students, especially in the end-of-term and year assessments in secondary schools. For instance, in Kenya, teachers' effective use of instructional time,

including beginning and ending instructions on time, has a positive impact on students' academic achievement (Fundia, Likoko and Mackatiani, 2023). Similarly, in Tanzania, proper effective use of instructional time enables teachers to cover the syllabus on time, while misuse of instructional time negatively influences curriculum implementation, which affects students' academic achievements (Massawe and Majokava, 2022). In Rwanda, it was observed that the quality academic achievement of learners at the end of term and year assessments in secondary schools is not only obtained from qualified, competent, and motivated teachers, but also highly achieved from the teachers' effective utilisation of instructional time (Nyirahabimana and Twagilimana, 2019). This enforced countries to rebuild and support the education systems in the East African region through heavily financing the secondary schools with learning resources and trained teachers capable of utilising the instructional time effectively, hence uplifting the academic achievement of students (Brudevold-Newman, 2017).

In Uganda, education was prioritised as the backbone for elevating the nation and its citizens from rampant poverty, which negatively affects the sustainable development goals of 2030 for obtaining highly competitive human resources who are instrumental in achieving the country's fundamental development, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2023). As a result, Uganda phased out the old traditional knowledge-based secondary curriculum, which focused mainly on what a learner is expected to know and introduced the new secondary competence-based curriculum, which focuses on what students are expected to do. This competence-based curriculum gives learners the opportunity to actively participate in the learning process, which develops their ability in critical thinking, practical techniques and problem solving, hence attaining a highly skilled and qualified workforce needed for the country's social, political and economic growth (Musoke, 2025).

Secondary schools in Uganda are managed by the Education policy (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-Primary Act, 2008) which sets up the measures running schools including the use of instructional time such as begins and end instruction on time, utilizes learning resources and administers students' task effectively (The Education Pre-primary, Primary and Post primary Act, 2008). Instructional time has a significant impact on the academic achievement of students (Lopez-Agudo and Marcenoro-Gutierrez 2022). Also, Defrancesco (2016) emphasises that effective utilisation of instructional time helps learners to attain better academic achievement. Similarly, Wedel (2021) found that instructional time has a positive impact on students' academic achievement. In the same view, Ummuhan (2019) noticed that instructional time has an impact on the academic achievement of learners. Therefore, administrators need to train and fully support the teachers to effectively utilise instructional time to enable learners to gain better academic achievement.

Academic achievement is the knowledge gained by a student, which is assessed by a teacher through marks (Narad and Abdulla 2016). Similarly, Said, Idris and Hussain (2018) opined that the academic achievement of learners depends on the behaviour of students within a specific period in schools. Again, Husaini and Shukor (2023) emphasised that the academic achievement of students is defined by a student's performance in assessments like examinations and tests. According to Al-Muslimawi and Hamid (2020), there are various factors inside and outside the school that contribute to the quality of academic achievement of students. For instance, Onwusa (2021) stressed that age has a positive impact on learners' academic achievement. Gobena (2018) revealed that the family level of education has a significant influence on the students' academic achievement. Furthermore, Ali, Shoukat and Bahoo (2021) found that poor perceptions and negative thoughts affect students' academic achievement. However, age, family level of education and poor perceptions affect students'

achievement. This study focused on the misuse of instructional time and students' academic achievement. Therefore, administrators should help the teachers and students to effectively use the instructional time to enable learners to achieve better grades.

Moreover, Muthuuri, Kaaria, and Makila (2021) found that positive attitudes and interactions between students and teachers can improve education and learning for good academic achievement in schools. The attitude and study habits of the students have also been found as a determining factor for academic achievement (Capuno *et al.* 2019). In the same view, Kukundakwe (2024) indicated that teachers' knowledge and methods of teaching have an impact on students' academic achievement. Also, Kibirige, Lutalo, and Saabavuma (2025) revealed that, effective use of learning materials positively impacts students' academic achievement. Furthermore, Ali and Nida (2018) found that students' personality traits and motivation significantly influence their academic achievement of students. Agbo-E *et al.* (2017) also discovered that teachers' level of experience has an impact on the academic achievement of students. In contradiction with the above researchers, this study concentrated on the misuse of instructional time and its impact on learners' achievement.

In addition, Sekiwa (2020) stated that school attendance has a significant influence on the academic achievement of students. The attitude of students towards their learning has been found to have a significant relationship with academic achievement (Kitur and Siano 2020). In addition, Sivrikaya (2019) indicated that personal motivation influences students' academic achievement. Muema, Mwanza and Mulwa (2020) indicated that, home environment influences the academic achievement of students. Mehndroo and Vandana (2020) argued that motivation affects the academic achievement of students. Shaheen and Awan (2020) also found that well-educated mothers guide and

prepare their children for better academic achievement than mothers with low education levels. Concerning this, Younas, Javid and Liu (2020) stated that a child raised in a loving, caring, secure, consistent and stable home environment develops well in social, psychological, physical, emotional, and moral hence improving the academic achievement of learners in schools. Therefore, it's vital for schools to have knowledge about school attendance, attitudes, motivation, home environment, and parents' education since it impacts learners' achievement. However, this study focused on the misuse of instructional time and its impact on students' academic achievement.

This study is exceptional and paves the way for elevating the body of knowledge in various ways, for instance, it bridges a gap in the literature by assessing the relationship between the misuse of instructional time and the academic achievement of students in secondary schools in the Mpigi district. This research also gives a realistic analysis of the correlation between the misuse of instructional time and the academic achievement of students. It also generates substantial information towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030 for quality education. Unlike the previous academic paper that examined the influence of learning environment and the teaching and learning process of students, this study examined the misuse of instructional time and the academic achievement of students. The objective of this study is to assess the misuse of instructional time and its impact on the academic achievement of students in secondary schools of the Mpigi district. This study also assessed how the misuse of instructional time, such as beginning and ending instruction on time, utilising learning resources and administering students' tasks, impacts the academic achievement of students in the end-of-term and year assessments in secondary schools of Mpigi district.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey research design was used in the study due to its ability to collect detailed data from many different respondents and a small sample at a moment in time (Thomas, 2020). This design was used with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach helped the researcher gather thorough non-numeric data on the topic. Data for the study was collected from secondary schools found in the Mpigi district, one school from each of the 7 parishes found in Muduuma sub-county Mpigi district. A school in each parish was significant in order to generate in-depth information on examining the misuse of instructional time and its impact on students' academic achievement in Mpigi district. A total of 7 out of 20 schools were sampled to participate in the study by picking one school from each parish purposively.

Study Area

This study was carried out in Muduuma sub-county, Mpigi district, central Uganda. Muduuma sub-county is made up of 7 parishes, including Malima, Lugyo, Mbazzi, Bulerejje, Tiribogo, Jeza and Magala. Mpigi district is bordered by Butambala district to the west, Kalungu district to the southwest, Wakiso district to the north and east, Mityana district to the northwest, and Kalangala district to the south. The district has a total area of 1,207.8 km² (466.3 sq mi). The latitude of Mpigi, Uganda, is 0.227353, and the longitude is 32.324924. The town of Mpigi lies approximately 37 kilometres (23 mi) west of Kampala in the capital city of Uganda. The coordinates of the district are 00° 14N, 32° 20 E, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2017).

The Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in secondary schools found in Muduuma sub-county, Mpigi district, central Uganda. These schools were chosen depending on their appropriate utilisation of

instructional time that supports better academic achievement of students. However, stakeholders are discontented with the academic achievement of students in these secondary schools. The study also focused on the misuse of instructional time and students' academic achievement of students in secondary schools.

Population and Sample

The targeted population was 190, including headteachers, deputy headteachers, the director of studies, teachers, and students. However, only 110 of the total population participated in the study, including 7 headteachers, 7 deputy headteachers, 7 directors of studies, 36 teachers, and 53 students. The headteachers, deputy headteachers and directors of studies were purposively sampled. Teachers and students were chosen depending on their performance level, teaching experience, and class level. The head of schools helped to organise teachers and students in their schools. These respondents were also selected because they gave consistent and reliable information required for the study.

Data Collection

The study adopted interviews, observations and focus group discussion techniques to gather information. Interviews were conducted with 7 headteachers, 7 deputy headteachers, and 7 directors of studies. Focused group discussions were carried out with 36 teachers and 53 students. The study also conducted observation analysis on teachers and students in the ongoing lessons.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analysed by thematic approaches. Interviews and focused group discussions were assessed, concise, and recorded on paper, for example, starting lessons late. The analysis of data was carried out in three steps, including preparing and organising data, creating themes, and coding. The preparation and

organisation of data for analysis started in the field with reading each recorded, summarised interview and focused group session. This empowered the researcher to become familiar with the data. It was followed by a detailed transcription of the focus group discussions and interview reports that helped the researcher to generate themes. After creating themes, the data were coded, which included relating the data to the themes created.

FINDINGS

How is the Instructional Time of Students in Secondary Schools

The interview held with the head of schools, all 7 headteachers stated that both teachers and students misuse the instructional time, for example, beginning and ending instruction late, utilising learning resources and administering students' tasks ineffectively in secondary schools of the Mpigi district. This was reechoed by all 7 deputy head teachers, who also emphasised that instructional time in secondary schools is misused by teachers and learners. It was again confirmed in the interview with the directors of studies who participated in the study that instructional time is ineffectively used in secondary schools of the Mpigi district. This was reechoed by teachers and students in the focus group discussion, who emphasised that instructional time is misused in secondary schools. For example, teachers begin and end instruction late, ineffectively utilise learning resources and administer students' tasks. It was also noticed in the observation analysis that, instructional time is misused for instance, teachers begins and end instruction late, utilizes learning resources and administers students' task ineffectively in secondary schools of Mpigi district, this negatively affect the academic achievement of learners resulting in poor grades of students in secondary schools of Mpigi district.

The Academic Achievement of Students in Secondary Schools

The headteachers in their interviews indicated that the academic achievement of students at the end of

term and year assessment is below the expectations of the stakeholders in schools. This was emphasised in the interview held with the deputy headteachers, who revealed that students' academic achievement in secondary schools is below the set targets of the stakeholders, administrators, teachers, students and parents. It was also confirmed by the directors of study in their interview that, academic achievement of learners at the end-of-term and year assessments is not meeting the expected standards of stakeholders in secondary schools of Mpigi district. This was reechoed by teachers and students who narrated in the focus group discussions that, academic achievement of students is not meeting the set goals of administrators in schools. It was also noticed in the observations analysis conducted that instructional time is misused, for instance, begins and ends instruction late, utilises learning resources and administers students' tasks ineffectively, which negatively affects students' academic achievement in secondary schools of the Mpigi district.

The Impact of Instructional Time and Academic Achievement of Students in Secondary Schools

Headteachers confirmed in their interviews that misuse of instructional time, for example, beginning and ending instruction late, utilising learning resources, and administering students' tasks ineffectively negatively impact the academic achievement of learners, especially in the end-of-term and year assessments. This was supported by the deputy headteachers, who narrated in their interview that misuse of instructional time greatly affects the academic achievement of students. This was reemphasised by the directors of study in their interviews that misuse of instructional time negatively impacts the academic achievement of students in secondary schools of the Mpigi district. It was also reechoed in the group-focused discussions by teachers and students that misuse of instructional time negatively affects the academic achievement of students in the end-of-term and year assessments in secondary schools. The study also depicted in the observation analysis that schools

with effective use of instructional time have better quality academic achievement, yet schools that misuse instructional time have poor academic grades. Therefore, misuse of instructional time affects students' academic achievement, while effective use of instructional time positively impacts the academic achievement of learners in secondary schools of the Mpigi district.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Instructional Time in Secondary Schools

The study results indicated that teachers and students misuse instructional time, for example, beginning and ending instruction late, utilising learning resources and administering students' tasks ineffectively in secondary schools of the Mpigi district. This was confirmed by the headteachers, deputy headteachers, directors of studies, teachers, and students who participated in the study. Therefore, misuse of instructional time negatively affects the academic achievement of students in schools. This was reemphasised in the study carried out by Cattaneo, Oggenfuss, and Wolte (2017), Wedel (2021), and Lopez-Agudo and Marcenoro-Gutierrez (2022), who revealed that misuse of instructional time influences the academic achievement of learners in secondary schools. Therefore, administrators, teachers, students, and parents in secondary schools need to ensure that schools effectively use instructional time to help learners achieve good academic grades.

Academic Achievement of Students in Secondary Schools

The study revealed that the academic achievement of learners is below the predictions of the stakeholders in secondary schools, which affects the set targets of meeting sustainable development goals of 2030 for obtaining highly competitive human resources who are instrumental in achieving the country's fundamental development. This was confirmed by the headteacher, deputy headteachers, director of studies, teachers, and students who contributed to the study, who emphasised that,

academic achievement of students, especially at the end-of-term and year assessment, is not meeting the expected goals of administrators, teachers, students and parents. In the same vein, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2023) confirmed that the quality academic achievement of students influences the sustainable development of the country. Therefore, stakeholders should join hands to improve and elevate the academic achievement of learners to acquire the qualified and holistic human resources needed for the sustainable development of the nation.

Impact of Misuse of Instructional Time on Students' Academic Achievement

The research also revealed that misuse of instructional time, for example, beginning and ending instructions late, utilising learning resources and administering students' tasks ineffectively negatively impact the academic achievement of students. This was supported by the head teachers, deputy headteachers, directors of studies, teachers and students who participated in the study and reported that misuse of instructional time negatively influences the academic achievement of learners. This was reconfirmed by Fundia, Likoko and Mackatiani (2023), Osei-Owusu *et al.* (2018), and Lopez-Agudo and Marcenoro-Gutierrez (2022), who revealed that misuse of instructional time negatively affects the academic achievement of students, especially in the end-of-term and year assessment. Therefore, administrators and other stakeholders should effectively use the instructional time in secondary schools to improve the academic achievement of students in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the misuse of instructional time and its impact on the academic achievement of students in secondary schools in the Mpigi district, central Uganda.

The study concluded that secondary schools in the Mpigi district misuse instructional time. The research also showed that the academic

achievement of students is below the set goals of the stakeholders. It again indicated that, misuse of instructional time negatively affects the academic achievement of students in Mpigi secondary schools.

The study recommended that School administrators should regularly monitor and supervise both teachers and students in schools to ensure effective use of instructional time. School administrators should also organise seminars for teachers to train them on how to use instructional time effectively, thereby enhancing the academic achievement of students in secondary schools.

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Declaration of interest: The authors had no conflict of interest.

Ethical statement: The authors declared that ethical considerations involved asking for permission from the school administrators. The intention of this study was well clarified and valued by the stakeholders in secondary schools. In the same line, the researcher formulated an outstanding rapport with research assistants and respondents. In conclusion, the academic work referred to in the process of writing this paper was accurately quoted in the text, and related titles were indicated in the reference list.

Data sharing statement: All the data backing up the findings and conclusions of this research are accessible through the concerned author.

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