



**UiT** The Arctic University of Norway

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION

**THE LEADERSHIP IMPACT OF KARAMOJONG TEACHERS ON THE ENROLMENT AND  
RETENTION OF LEARNERS IN MOROTO MUNICIPALITY GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS,  
UGANDA**

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Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies

May, 2023





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## **Acknowledgements**

First, I bless the Almighty Lord for giving me strength, wisdom, and good health to persevere throughout this journey.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Aunt Hellen for hosting me and introducing me to the community. To the DEO of Moroto District, and to the Karamajong school leaders Moroto municipality government primary schools. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Velina Ninkova and Bashiru Salifu, for your supervision, knowledge and guiding this work to its logical conclusion. You have been a wonderful inspiration to me.

My sincere appreciation is also extended to all members of staff from the Centre for Sami Studies (SEAM) at the Arctic University of Tromsø. Thank you for insightful seminars, and research financial help. I am honored that you served as my guide for the past two years. I would also like to thank Dr. Heather Stein for her assistance with the proofreading and formatting.

My gratitude again goes to the project from the Indigenous Citizenship and Education (ICE-project) for the scholarship funding, I am very grateful.

I extend a heartfelt gratitude to my husband, Ssejjemba Besweri Charles. Thank you for instilling in me the confidence, courage, persistence, and drive to believe that I can accomplish anything. Without your help, I would not have been able to finish my research study, and I will always be appreciative of your sacrifice, patience, and support. I'm hoping that my experience will serve as an illustration of what I want for our family: The DREAM BIG!

Finally, I express my bouquet of gratitude to my classmates, the MIS 2021 cohort. It has been a great pleasure to get to know you all.

I dedicate this research to the educators in Moroto Municipality.

## **Abstract**

Despite the efforts of the government of Uganda to train school leaders in the Karamoja region, the enrolment and completion rate of Karamojong pupils in Moroto municipality primary schools remains low. Previous research attributes this to historical and environmental factors that promote Karamojong parents' failure to attach value to formal education. This study analyses the leadership impact of Karamojong teachers on the enrolment and retention of learners in schools. It adopts an exploratory qualitative approach to gather data using interviews, informal conversations, field observations, and secondary documents from 15 participants using purposive sampling techniques, namely headteachers, deputy headteachers, directors of studies, heads of departments, and parents to examine the organizational structure of government primary schools in Moroto Municipality and identify the practices that influence enrolment and retention. The intercultural educational leadership framework and the concept of Indigenous relatedness in the educational setting guided the thematic analysis of the data.

The findings show that involving learners in cocurricular activities, guidance and counselling, academic performance, provision of meals, and involving parents in decision making were key activities in the retention of learners in school. Some parents do remain opposed to having their children in school and argue that formal education erodes Karamojong traditions and values.

**Keywords:** School Leaders, Indigenous Peoples, Enrolment and Retention, Formal education





## **Abbreviations**

HOD	Head of Department
DOS	Director of Studies
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
UNEB	Uganda National Examination Board
PLE	Primary Leaving Exams
UPE	Universal Primary Education
ABEK	Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja
UCE	Uganda Certificate of Education
A Level	Advanced Level
UACE	Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education
DEO	District Education Officer
LCV	Local Council Five
ACWGIP	African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations
DEP	Diploma in Primary Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
CAO	Chief Administration Officer
SMC	School Management Committee
MDD	Music Dance and Drama
UNATO	Uganda National Teachers' Association



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership plays a crucial role in improving learners' results, particularly among Indigenous and marginalized groups (Ononuju, 2016). For a school to be successful, there must be a well-established management team to handle enrolment and retention of learners (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2001). A typical school management team in Uganda comprises a headteacher, deputy headteacher, director of studies (DOS), and head of departments (HODs)<sup>1</sup>. This leadership body is responsible for upholding up the school's vision and mission and work towards meeting school goals, offers guidance to teaching and non-teaching staff to facilitate teaching and learning and participates in decision-making, and is responsible for effectively utilizing possibilities for initiative-taking (Muijs & Harris, 2007).

The Ministry of Education (MoES) in Uganda offers basic management courses and conducts workshops for heads of schools and deputy headteachers to acquire school administrative and managerial skills (Balanskat & Gerhard, 2005). The academic performance levels of schools are generally low, despite the trainings and the availability of learning materials (Nsubuga, 2008). Some research suggests that training is less important than leadership style as a factor that affects the performance of the schools (Adekunle & Omolola, 2019).

The ability to transform a school through teaching and non-teaching staff is key to the school's growth. Indeed, the school's leadership system is a key element in determining and setting the standard for the ability of the school to attract and retain learners (Mahmud & Sanusi, 2021). Headteachers need leadership skills to implement the mission and vision of the school, and a school's academic performance is the measure by which the competency of the school management team is assessed (Nsubuga, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> The Headteacher, also known as the Principal or the Head, leads the school management team. DOS is a teacher who oversees all academic activity in the school. HODs are teachers who ensures that all teaching staff in their respective departments are given opportunities to fulfil their academic potential and that departmental plans are achieved.

The data released by Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB)<sup>2</sup> for the 2019 Primary Leaving Examination (PLE)<sup>3</sup> reports that the Karamoja districts performed relatively lower compared to other regions in the country (Mawanda, 2020). Past research attributes this to the pastoralist lifestyle of the Karamojong community, where the majority of parents involve their children in such domestic activities as gardening (for girls) and looking after cattle (for boys) that leaves less time for the learner to attend school (Manyire, 2011). This thesis instead focuses on the leadership impact of Karamojong teachers on the enrolment and retention of learners through a case study and thematic analysis of data gathered from Moroto municipality government primary school management and parents in the Karamoja region. It is important to note that all the leaders I discuss in this thesis are Karamojong.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The introduction chapter provides general background on the population study before identifying its objectives, research questions, purpose, and rationale. Chapter two presents a more detailed account of the socio-political context of the study and formal primary education among the Karamojong people. Chapter three offers a literature review that presents the complexity of defining an Indigenous people in the Ugandan context and presents the previous research on Indigenous education and the conceptual framework. Chapter four describes the methodology, elaborating methods, discusses the research ethics and reflexivity. Chapter five includes both the findings and analysis. Chapter six discusses those findings, lastly chapter seven presents the limitations of this study, and implications for future research, practice, and policy.

## **1.1 Karamojong People of Uganda**

Karamojong are Nilotic people who live in north-eastern Uganda. The Karamojong are one of Uganda's Indigenous Peoples (Mitchell, 2022), whose inhabitants are comprised of eleven ethnic groups with similar dialects; Matheniko, Pian, Bokora, Jie, Dodoth, Pokot, Tepeth, Nyakwae, Ik (Teuso), Napore, and Ethur (Byabagambi, 2020; Czuba, 2019). They speak Ngakarimojong or ṅaKarimojoŋ, an eastern Nilotic language that is part of the Nilo-Saharan

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<sup>2</sup> UNEB is the national assessment body of public exams in Uganda that was established in 1983 under chapter 37 of the Uganda National Examination Board Act. Its role is to promote the interest of Uganda and all its citizens as regards of management of educational assessment (Lunkuse, 2015).

<https://old.ulii.org/ug/legislation/consolidated-act/137>

<sup>3</sup> The Primary Leaving Examination is a national exam that pupils or learners sit at the end of their primary school in Uganda. PLE covers four subjects: English, math, science, and social studies. Each subject is scored from “distinction one” to “failure nine,” and the best mark a learner can achieve is four aggregates (first grade) and the worst 36 aggregates, which is a grade U or Ungraded. <https://bridge.ac.ug/ple-success/national-exam-ple/>

group (Sobania, 1994). Anthropologists argue that the Karamojong moved from Abyssinia as a single group in the seventeenth century and split into two groups along the modern Kenyan-Ethiopian border, one group decided to reside in Turkana land in Kenya, the present-day Turkana people. The second group headed westwards and settled in the area Mount Moroto (Boone, 2003; Gulliver, 1955). Drought and subsequent famine in the western area promoted the migration of young men to other, safer areas (Bainomugisha, Okello, & Ngoya, 2017). The older men who were left behind were described as “ekar ngimojong,” which translates as “old men can walk no further” (Kilavi, 2019). From this phrase, the name Karamojong is derived.

Karamoja is one of Uganda’s hardest to reach regions due to civil wars (Datzberger, 2017), cattle raiding, and famine (Ayoo, Opio, & Kakisa, 2013). The Karamoja sub-region comprises seven districts: Nakapiripiriti, Abim, Moroto, Kotido, Amudat, Napak, and Kaabong (Figure 1). Karamoja region has a population of 8,232,624 people (Uganda Bureau of Stastics, 2022), and it experiences a longer drought period and one season of rainfall (Byabagambi, 2020). Karamojong move from place to place in search of water and pasture for their cattle during the drought (Chapman & Kagaha, 2009). Their livelihood mainly depends on nomadic pastoralism (Graham & Davis-Floyd, 2021). The Karamojong culture and way of life differ from the ethnic groups around them (Human, Rights, & Affairs, 2006).

**Figure 1:**

*Map of the Karamoja region*



Source: *Map of Karamoja Region showing the study sites in the districts of Moroto and Kotido, 2015*. Retrieved from

Cattle are central to Karamojong identity and a major source of food and economic security (McCadden, Lundgren, Ojanduru, Velcoff, & Shattuck, 2016). The division of labour is gendered: men do the herding work, whereas women are involved in small scale farming (Wang, 2013). The Karamojong live in a semi-permanent community homestead referred to as *manyatta* (Figure 2), and these homesteads provide shelter to extended families living close to each other and near to livestock camps, or kraals. This kind of setting provides security to both their cattle and families, who often live close to towns and trading centres (Stites, Akabwai, Mazurana, & Ateyo, 2007). Education is a shared responsibility of all family members grouped according to gender (Mubiru, 2010). Knowledge is transferred orally through storytelling in group or individually through observation and imitation (Datzberger, 2022).

## Figure 2

A “*manyata*,” a semi-permanent community homestead in Moroto District (June 2022)



Source: Researcher’s fieldwork

### 1.1.1 Formal education in the Karamoja region

Formal education was initially introduced in Uganda by Christian missionaries at the end of nineteenth century (Otyola et al., 2022). The education system received resistance from several

regions in Uganda, Karamoja inclusive, it was a strategic tool of the colonial administration and its institutions that were undermining Karamojong culture (Datzberger, 2022). Even after Uganda's independence in the 1960s, Karamojong continued to be reluctant to enrol their children in formal education because it interrupted household core responsibility and normal routines; Karamojong households rely heavily on the contribution of children's labour for food and income (Manyire, 2011). Since the government of Uganda implemented Universal Primary Education (UPE) for all children from six-to-eighteen-years-old in 1997, the UPE program yielded fewer gains in Karamoja than other regions in the country. Although shortly after UPE's implementation enrolment figures of the Karamojong children increased, the region still has the highest percentage of Uganda's population with no schooling or incomplete primary school; primary schooling is especially less common for girls (Brown, Kelly, & Mabugu, 2017).

To address the low enrolment and retention of Karamojong children in formal schools, the district local government in collaboration with Save the Children, an international NGO, designed and initiated the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) program to bridge the gap in educational provision in Karamoja in 1998 (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019). ABEK started with approximately 5,500 learners at its initial phase (Namirembe, 2004), the number increased to over 32,000 in 2006, among these only 2500 crossed to primary school (Save the Children in Uganda, 2009)<sup>4</sup>.

ABEK is an approach to provide basic education to children from pastoral communities whose lifestyle limited them from attending formal schools (Manyire, 2011). The program targets children aged 6-18, and learners study under trees at several grazing stations as they herd cattle. ABEK objective is to help learners learn how to read and write. The effectiveness of the system is monitored by an instructor who is allocated a classroom (Byabagambi, 2020). The instructors are trained to manage 'moving classrooms.' Although there are challenges with this system, the program has been promising. Reports show an increase in the number of children enrolled in these study centre 'schools' and some limited increase in parents and caregivers' support of

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<sup>4</sup> I did not find detailed data of ABEK enrolment and those crossing over to primary school year per year from the time of formation.

formal education. Indeed, as the hostility toward formal education has drastically decreased, literacy levels have risen in the region (Krätli, 2001, 2009).

However, the number of learners crossing over from ABEK to primary level remains low due to a confluence of complicated factors that include regional insecurity (Knutzen & Smith, 2012), government policies, environmental conditions, and socioeconomic traits as well as culture (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014a). Only one out of every ten children in the sub-region graduates from primary school (Brown et al., 2017). The costs of school strains the Indigenous community; many households cannot afford books, uniforms, and school meals for all their children (Krätli, 2001), and Karamoja schools are not ideal learning environments with too few classrooms, inadequate instructional materials like textbooks, and not enough desks or stationery supplies (Elsbeth, 2016).

From the MoES records, the enrolment of Karamoja region in 2020 was as follows: Abim 29,187; Napaka 16992; Nakapiripiriti 14,011; Kaabong 22,771; Amuda 8,571; Moroto 8,427; and Kotido 1,227, These figures are the lowest in the country. (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

In the 1990s, the Government of Uganda initiated the Universal Primary Education (UPE) to promote UNESCO's 'Education for all goal.' UPE became an instrument of hope and example of success in the country, and most school-age children were able to attend school and completed, at least, primary school.<sup>5</sup> However, a 2010 report by UNESCO indicates that children from Indigenous communities in Uganda such as the Karamojong, the Batwa, and the Bashongola have registered less success in the educational program. Karamoja region registered the highest number of people with either incomplete or no primary education, 79.8% for females and 64.8% for males (Brown et al., 2017). Few studies have examined the role of Karamojong school leadership on the enrolment and retention of Karamojong learners in school. Based on this gap, this research will explore the leadership impact of Karamojong

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<sup>5</sup> UPE is a government political initiative that aims at ensuring that every school going child enroll and complete primary school, with the objectives: to reduce inequalities in education, reducing poverty by equipping every individual with basic skills (Kan & Klasen, 2018). Act 13 of the Education Act of 2008 promises equitable access to pre-primary, primary and post-primary Act 13 education that is conducive, quality, relevant and affordable for all children of all sexes, categories, and special circumstances.

teachers on enrolment and retention of Karamojong learners in primary schools, as well as the existing leadership practices of Karamojong teachers.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The objectives for this case study are three-fold:

- (a) describe the organizational structure of the government primary schools in Moroto; (b) assess the influence of Karamojong teachers on enrolment and retention of learners in Moroto; (c) identify the successful strategies used by Karamojong school leaders to attract and retain Karamojong pupils in schools.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The four research questions for this thesis were guided by the principles of Indigenous research ethics, which postulates benefiting the Indigenous individuals or communities in studies that involves them (Smith, 2013).

1. What practices do Karamojong school leaders use to retain old and attract new learners in Moroto municipality schools?
2. How do parents perceive Karamojong school leaders?
3. What challenges persist in the enrollment and retention of the school learners?
4. What can be done by school leaders to address these challenges?

### **1.5 Purpose and rationale**

Findings from other countries do not provide a satisfactory understanding of the leadership experience in rural schools in the Karamoja region of Uganda's Moroto district. My personal, academic, and professional experience as a teacher and administrator flagged how leadership in rural primary schools is quite difficult compared to urban schools and involves different challenges. This research will assist policymakers, who can embrace the intercultural educational leadership framework and Indigenous relatedness in education settings to benefit schools in Indigenous communities. The study also adds to the theories and approaches on how to improve leadership of the Karamojong teachers in the Indigenous communities' primary schools.

## **1.6 Summary**

This chapter gives an overview of formal education in Karamojong that highlights the performance of primary schools in Karamoja region and factors contributing to the poor performance in the region. Discussed the ABEK program that was introduced to bridge the gap in formal education in Karamoja region. It also identified the structure of the argument, the research problem, the four research questions guiding this master's thesis project, and its purpose and rationale. A qualitative case study of Karamojong school leaders to gather data on their best practices and the challenges they face will improve our understanding of the leadership impact of Karamojong teachers on the enrolment and retention of the learners.



## **2 Contextual Background**

Socio-political factors such as government policies, societal attitudes, cultural values, and shared history can influence access to education, educational quality, and cultural identity in Indigenous communities (Aikman, 2005; Ndofirepi, 2021). Research has shown that educational programs must be culturally responsive to support the development of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (Makura, 2020; S. R. Nambalirwa, & Ndhlovu, P. E., 2021). Therefore, scholars researching primary education in Indigenous communities should consider the socio-political context to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Indigenous students and communities. This chapter provides an overview of the beginning of formal education in Uganda, the current education system in Uganda, the formation of UPE in Uganda, the appointment of school leaders, the role of Headteacher in a government funded schools, and the nature of the enrolment in both the Karamoja region and Uganda as a whole.

### **2.1 Origins of formal education in Uganda**

Formal education in Uganda started with Church Missionary Society in the 1880s, when Uganda was a British Protectorate (Ssewamala, Wang, Karimli, & Nabunya, 2011). Missionaries were solely responsible for all the education implementation, financing, and administering of schools, but these proselytizers worked together with the local chiefs. In the 1920s, Uganda's protectorate government joined the missionary education program and provided group missionaries aid and grants to build public schools (Evans, 1994; Namukas & Buye, 2009).

After Uganda's independence in 1962, the government took full control of public schools. Unlike other newly independent countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda did not engage in educational expansion (Ward, Penny, & Read, 2006). Indeed, between 1971 and 1985, the country's education program was disrupted by the political and economic instability caused by the military coups and the resultant general insecurity (S. Nambalirwa, 2010). The burden of financing education was left in the hands of parents, infrastructure was destroyed, and teachers' salaries decreased to below minimum salary wage (S. Nambalirwa, 2010).

## **2.2 Universal Primary Education in Uganda**

Education is considered a prerequisite for social and economic growth (Otyola et al., 2022), and when President Museveni came into power in 1986, his government developed strategies to create functional and fundamental approaches of addressing the country's economic challenges through education (Okech & Rolleston, 2007). The MoES was founded to oversee education and followed by the establishment of the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) in 1987. These two ministries provided recommendations for the creation of Universal Primary Education in 1989 (S. Nambalirwa, 2010).

In 1992, the government released a White Paper outlining UPE reforms for the following year. This initial plan included the creation of school administrative bodies, curriculum reforms, assessment reforms, the creation of instructional materials, and arrangements for progress monitoring (Okech & Rolleston, 2007). Enrolment rates did not rise until 1997, when primary education was granted free-of-charge for four children in every family. UPE increased the general learners enrolment as well as giving opportunity to the poor children, especially rural residents, to access primary education (Essama-Nssah, 2011). The government, additionally, funded instructional materials, basic physical facilities, teachers' salaries and training (Okech & Rolleston, 2007).

The success of four children per family policy informed the extension of free education to all children between 6 to 18 in Uganda in 2004 (Kyambadde & Khumalo, 2022). This led to a drastic increase in enrolment across the country. Before the implementation of UPE in 1996, the number of enrolled children in primary school level was 2.1 million, a figure that rose to 6.1 million in 1999 (Otyola et al., 2022). An early study by Deininger (2003) indicated that the program is associated with an increase in primary school attendance and a reduction in gender inequalities in attendance. UNEB results of the 2019 primary leaving examination confirm those findings. Of the 695,804 candidates from 13,475 sitting centers (schools) registered for the PLE in 2019, 473,893 (68.2%) were UPE learners (Otyola et al., 2022).

## **2.3 Education system in present-day Uganda**

The 2008 Education Act of Uganda outlines four distinct levels of education, namely pre-primary, primary, post-primary, and post-secondary (Table 1). Education is provided by both the government and the private sector. Pre-primary enrolls children between 2-and-5-years-old for what is normally 24-to-36 months of study, depending on the school. The financing of pre-

primary education is the sole responsibility of the parents or guardians. The MoES provides guidelines on minimum standards for school buildings, equipment, the curriculum followed by the teachers, and the teachers' training to ensure that teachers have the necessary requirements to teach the learners (S. Nambalirwa, 2010).

Primary school is a seven-year period of study that starts from primary one (P.1) to primary seven (P.7) and gives basic skills to the children like writing and reading. Pupils start primary schooling at the age of 6. Post-primary (or secondary school in other jurisdictions) is a six-year study program divided into four years of Ordinary Secondary or 'O Level' at the end of which the student can either take the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) or complete two years of Advanced level or 'A Level.' Post-secondary education consists of programs that run for 3-to-5 years (Tumwesige, 2020). Post-Secondary is subdivided into technical and vocational studies and university. Performance at the A level is a major determinate for joining a university (Nakabugo, Byamugisha, & Bithaghalire, 2008). Course modules are taught and graded in English at all levels, except for early primary grades where mother-tongue is an accepted alternative for teaching (Ojijo, 2014). The Ugandan government continues to work toward providing free primary education and secondary education to learners under the Millennium goal mandate and because education is a fundamental human right (Spring, 2000).

**Table 1**

*Structure of Uganda's Education System*

Education Level	Duration	Award	Progress opportunities
Pre-primary	2-3 years		-Primary level
Primary Education	7 years	Primary Leaving Examination	-Lower Secondary (O) level -Technical school
Lower Secondary	4 years	Uganda Certificate of Education	-Advanced Secondary (A) level -Technical institutes like Teachers' Colleges or other departmental training institutions
Technical School	3 years	Certificate	-Technical Institute
Primary Teachers College	2 years	Certificate	-National Teachers College

Advanced Secondary	2 years	Uganda Certificate of Education	Advanced of Training Institutions like National Teachers College, College of Commerce
Uganda College of Commerce	2/3 years	Diploma	-University
National Teachers College	2 years	Diploma	-University
Uganda Technical College	2 years	Diploma	-University
University	3/5 years	Degree	-Postgraduate Studies

Source:(G. o. Uganda, 1992)

The school year in Uganda typically runs from February to December, with breaks in April, August, and December. The exact length of the school year may vary depending on the school and the grade level.

#### **2.4 Schoolteachers and Leaders**

To become a primary teacher in Uganda, one must have a minimum of grade III certificate in education from a recognized institution. This certificate program typically lasts for two years and is offered in various teacher training colleges throughout the country. In addition, teachers must also pass a Teacher Certification Exam administered by the MoES. The exam includes both written and practical components to assess the teacher's knowledge and skills in the subject area they intend to teach. While some teachers may have additional post-secondary degrees, the majority only hold the certificate in education as their primary qualification. Only about 5% of primary school teachers in Uganda have a university degree (World Bank, 2018). According to the MoES, teachers are required to undergo at least 80 hours of in-service training every year. This training is typically organized by the government or by teacher training colleges. The training is often unpaid, but teachers may be reimbursed for travel and other expenses (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2010).

Schools that receive government aid are headed by one headteacher and one or two deputy headteachers, depending on the size of the school. Sperandio and Kagoda (2008), found that leadership roles in Uganda were occupied mainly by teachers who were formerly HODs. Headteachers are rarely recruited from outside organisations but are instead promoted from teaching positions. They rely heavily on their experiences dealing with learners, as classroom

managers and disciplinarians (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). School leaders are also trained to coach and mentor learners, to create a schoolwide positive behaviour management system, and to manage classroom behaviours (Hungu, 2011). Each leader's ability is a unique combination of personal traits, academic education, pre-service training, classroom practice, and special training on school management.

The appointment of headteachers is decentralized. Districts have authority over primary education under the supervision of an education committee headed by Local Council Five (LCV). District policymakers work with District Education Officers (DEOs) to implement policies in schools (Suzuki, 2002). A headteacher of a primary school must have a university degree in education and relevant experience in primary school teaching. Deputy head of schools must have a grade five (V) or diploma from any recognized institution of learning with six or more years of teaching and must hold a position of responsibility in a primary school. A well-trained teacher, as stated in the 1992 Government White Paper on Education, has a crucial role to play in creating strong connections between the school and the community, positively impacting national development initiatives, and preparing the human resource for national development (G. o. Uganda, 1992).

The Education Act of Uganda (2008) stipulates the roles of a Headteacher in government-funded schools. Among the major responsibilities is being personally answerable to the School Management Committee, financial accountability, and management of the organization and conduct of the school. It is the responsibility of the headteacher to monitor the implementation of the national curriculum and syllabus set by the MoES. They inspect and supervise all activities in school, arrange the admission of learners, and collect tuition and school fees.

Indigenous teachers have experience and knowledge about pedagogies that are helpful for Indigenous learners (Santoro, Reid, Crawford, & Simpson, 2011). For more effective teaching, a teacher concentrates on the day-to-day activities of the Indigenous learners, with special emphasis on the use of dialogue, drawings, story-tellings, and writing (Sianturi, Chiang, & Au Hurit, 2018). The advantage of Indigenous teachers teaching the Indigenous children is their better honed skills at addressing specific problems in the cultural context with lived experience (Santoro & Reid, 2006).

## **2.5 Summary**

This chapter provides critical background on formal education in Uganda. It discusses its evangelical history, disruption in the 1980s, and resurgence in the 1990s. Two key government programs were discussed at length, namely UPE, as well as the present-day education system's structure, workforce, and approach to Indigenous learners. The next chapter will discuss how extant literature on the controversies for understanding Karamojong as Indigenous peoples, Indigenous educational leadership, and the concepts of Indigenous relatedness in educational setting and intercultural educational leadership framework can be fruitfully applied to this unique contextual setting in a case study of the Karamoja region.

### **3 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

This chapter is divided into three sections. It begins with a review of the literature and controversy about the term “Indigenous peoples” in Africa and in Uganda. This discussion will demonstrate that the Karamojong should be considered an Indigenous people whose education deserves special attention. Next, I provide a survey of extant scholarship on not only Indigenous education leadership and formal education in Africa, but also work already conducted on the Karamojong people. The last section of the chapter discusses the concepts of Indigenous relatedness in educational settings and the intercultural educational leadership framework, the lenses through which I will analyse my data in relation to the research questions for this thesis.

#### **3.1 Indigenous peoples in Africa**

Much as some African nations adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in September 2007, the term “Indigenous people” in Africa is still contested (Balaton-Chrimes, 2013). The diversity of ethnicities and ancestral heritage is deeply bound up in terminologies and discourses of political power (Guodaar & Bardsley, 2021). Indigenous peoples’ rights are challenging to handle because political leaders who want to avoid discrimination against ethnic groups also oppose their claim of rights over land and natural resources, especially in states with limited resources or a troubled recent history (Saugestad, 2001).

Coates gives a working definition of Indigenous peoples as defined by Jose R. Martinez Cobo and that makes an important distinction between marginalized communities and Indigenous peoples:

Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal system. (K. Coates, 2004)

In most African countries, the acute dilemma is not how Indigenous people are defined. Most African governments have ignored or rejected the concept for various reasons related to recent colonial histories, nation-building challenges, and linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity.

Saugestad (2001) argues that it is a regrettable fact that most of the Indigenous people in the Third World countries find themselves in a situation of poverty and deprivation, lacking in resources and scoring low on metrics of education and self-determination. Commonly in Africa, Indigenous peoples are not identified in terms of the culture, traditions, skills, or other specific qualities that they possess. Instead, they are identified by what they are lacking: by not having a clearly-defined political structure with formalized leadership positions; by not living in established villages; by not speaking the majority language; or by not having access to a number of resources (Saugestad, 2001)

### **3.1.1 Karamojong**

The governments of most African countries have either ignored or rejected the concept of Indigenous Peoples. Instead, they employ a controversial term, like marginalized minority (Saugestad, 2001). Uganda is no exception and does not make a clear distinction between Indigenous people and ethnic minorities. The Third Schedule of 2006 Uganda Constitution recognizes 65 Indigenous communities (T. R. o. Uganda, 2006). What these communities share is that they existed before colonialism. Uganda's constitution (2006) does not define Indigenous people, but it does recognize minority rights. Article 36 "the minorities have a right to participate in the decision-making process and their views and interests shall be taken into consideration in making the national plans and programs" (T. R. o. Uganda, 2006).

A lack of a clear line between Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities in Uganda reflects a larger cultural phenomenon in Uganda, a lack of a sense of a shared Ugandan nationhood or identity before the various ethnic regions that make up the nation state of Uganda merged (Kagumba, 2013). Although Uganda is a member of UN and has committed to respecting the fundamental human rights of the Indigenous and the maximum enjoyment of rights and freedoms of all people in Article 20 of its constitution (Stavenhagen, 2009), the country has a long and not easily forgotten history of only protecting the rights of dominant ethnic groups (Gilbert & Sena, 2018).

This thesis adopts the definition of Indigenous People proposed by The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which outline the characteristics of Indigenous peoples in the following:

The overall characteristics of groups identifying themselves as Indigenous peoples are that their cultures and ways of life differ considerably from the



dominant society, and that their cultures are under threat, in some cases to the point of extinction. A key characteristic for most of them is that the survival of their particular way of life depends on access and rights to their traditional lands and the natural resources thereon. They suffer from discrimination as they are regarded as less developed and less advanced than other more dominant sectors of society. They often live in inaccessible regions, often geographically isolated, and suffer from various forms of marginalization, both politically and socially. They are subjected to domination and exploitation within national political and economic structures that are commonly designed to reflect the interests and activities of the national majority. This discrimination, domination and marginalization violates their human rights as peoples/communities, threatens the continuation of their cultures and ways of life and prevents them from being able to genuinely participate in decisions regarding their own future and forms of development.” (Rights, 2008, p. 7)

With these characteristics in mind, the hunter-gathers and the pastoralists in Uganda commonly known as Batwa and the Karamojong respectively are rightly described as Indigenous Peoples.

### **3.2 Indigenous education in Africa**

Before colonization, Africans passed on knowledge and information from one generation to another through shared experiences, rituals, and orally through elders in the communities. Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019), Indigenous knowledge presents a strong philosophical, theoretical, and practical argument for the mainstreaming of Indigenous knowledge in curricula development of teaching and learning across the African continent, based on the ongoing search for the appropriate education that can produce sensitive, innovative, and committed to the needs of the continent. Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) argues that learners will find it simple to make a connection between classroom learning and daily lives when Indigenous knowledge serves as the foundation for instruction. The author further argues that educators, entrepreneurs, policymakers, researchers, and others interested in discovering long-term, effective solutions for regional and global advancement should be interested in Indigenous knowledge and education in Africa.

Another research by Abah, Mashebe, and Denuga (2015) on the integration of African Indigenous knowledge systems into the teaching of sciences in Africa focused on the consideration of cultural backgrounds of the learners in planning and teaching science. They argue that in many African countries today, formal education continues to be Euro-centric in outlook and academic in orientation, reflecting Western scientific cultures rather than the African cultures of learners and the teaching respectively. The “cultural gaps” between the expectations of school curriculum and those of the environment in which the learners are

socialised results into underachievement in schools. Their findings revealed that both Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) and Western science can collectively support the teaching of science to have common ground in Africa.

Educationist Mawere (2015)'s landmark study on Indigenous knowledge and public education in Africa focused on the Sub-Saharan region. He discovered that Indigenous communities have always found value in their own native form of knowledge. His study flagged how when value and a modicum of respect are provided to Indigenous knowledge, especially intangible legacy, they can substantially enhance the learning process of Indigenous People in African.

### **3.2.1 Primary formal education on Karamojong**

Primary education is an introductory stage of formal education that offers fundamental instruction, serves as a foundation for general culture, and promotes the growth of moral character traits like intelligence and curiosity (Hadjichambis et al., 2020). Since the Universal Primary Education (UPE), a major strategy for the global goal of Education for all, was implemented by the government of Uganda, scholars from many academic disciplines have presented their research on Karamoja primary formal education.

Political scientist and international education researcher Datzberger (2022) "Lost in Transition" sheds light on the complex and often violent intersections of modernization, development, and formal education. Her findings revealed that Karamojong's relationship with formal education is shaped by resistance, cultural representation, irrelevance, and structural violence. Formal education has to a certain extent, benefited the Karamojong, but also fostered various forms of violence, aid paradoxes, and dead ends.

Social and development worker and researcher Namukwaya and Kibirige (2019) investigated parents' perception of UPE to discover the major socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural reasons influencing Karamoja parents' decision to enrol their children in primary schools. The research reveals how few Karamojong parents had received formal education, which likely influences their perceived value of formal education and UPE.

Namukwaya and Kibirige (2014a) also examined the effect of selected government interventions on enrolment and retention of pupils through the provision of school supplies, the allocation of school funding, and the establishment of school management committees, among others. These findings indicate that effective participation of Karimojong children in the

development process will remain low unless the government strengthens the existing interventions and designs new strategies. Disabilities studies researchers Ojok and Wormnæs (2013) investigated teachers' attitudes and willingness to teach learners with intellectual disabilities in their daily classes in Karamoja region. Their findings indicate that positive attitudes are slightly more prevalent than negative attitudes.

### **3.2.2 Indigenous Educational Leaders in remote schools**

Whereas there is some limited scholarship on primary formal education in Karamoja, there has been, to my knowledge, no study of Indigenous educational leadership in remote schools of Uganda. For this reason, the present study is informed by research on educational leadership in rural areas from other Indigenous contexts.

For example, D'Arbon, Fasoli, Frawley, and Ober (2009) examined Indigenous educational leadership in Australian remote settings to identify the abilities, knowledge, and qualities necessary for successful leadership in the distinctive contexts in which Indigenous educational leaders' function. As Indigenous educational leaders manage their positions in the more developed communities and cultures, this understanding is necessary to build their capacity as leaders. The findings revealed that in remote Indigenous communities, local people have strong cultural connections to one another, connected to their lands, languages, and cultural practices.

Jorgensen and Niesche (2011) focused on curriculum leadership in remote Indigenous communities in Australia to highlight the complexities faced by the principals in remote Indigenous communities. Principals encountered a variety of difficulties that are not typical of principals in metropolitan or regional settings. For instance, high turnover of staff, staff dissatisfaction, lack of resources, low morale, mentoring, time release, capacity for professional development. This affects their ability to carry out many of the necessary tasks, particularly those related to curriculum leadership.

Kamara (2017) an Indigenous educational researcher on gender carried out a case study of five female Indigenous principals in the Northern Territory of Australia, highlighting their experiences as female educational leaders in Indigenous communities. Her study findings revealed that the daily complex roles and difficulties faced by female Indigenous principals in communities with broader Indigenous epistemologies, beliefs, and value systems are yet to be fully embraced by the mainstream educational leadership perspectives.

In conclusion, the literature published on Karamojong formal education found limited scholarly information about the leadership impact of Karamojong teachers on enrolment and retention of learners in primary Schools. Therefore, this study seeks to fill in this gap in research on formal education for Karamojong people.

### **3.3 Conceptual framework**

Tracy defines leadership as the ability to elicit extraordinary performance from ordinary people (Tracy, 2014). A leaders' effectiveness is measured by how they motivate, pass on knowledge create and maintain their vision to reach long-targeted goals, and to take risks (Spillane, 2005). Effective leadership is characterized by a service mentality, good at training skills, reliability, responsibility, good communication skills, vision, willingness to share, and strong self-esteem (Algahtani, 2014). Educational leadership theories have only recently started to recognize and consider diversity-related concerns, including ethnicity, colour, race, and gender. To integrate the minority voices previously ignored in the formation of dominant leadership theories, there needs to be a change toward more culturally diverse viewpoints (Frawley, Fasoli, D Arbon, & Ober, 2010). This section discusses the conceptual framework of this study to explore educational leadership in the Indigenous context, namely the Intercultural Educational Leadership Framework and the concept of "Indigenous relatedness."

#### **3.3.1 Indigenous Educational Leadership**

Indigenous leaders are under-researched, and Indigenous leaders are needed in schools that work with Indigenous students (Faircloth & Tippeconnic III, 2013). Indigenous school leaders share experiences and reflections of educational teachers that highlight the value of articulating a vision for leading, learning, teaching, and living that is culturally respectful and socially responsible (Benham & Murakami-Ramalho, 2010). They do this by promoting the importance of Indigenous sovereignty and the preservation of culture and language (Benham & Murakami-Ramalho, 2010). Indigenous leaders in educational institutions require people to be mindful of the objectives of self-termination and decolonization of education through locally designed, culturally appropriate education (S. K. Coates, Trudgett, & Page, 2021).

Indigenous educational leaders are required to build connections with a range of organizations, communities, and sectors and be knowledgeable about knowledge systems from the past, present, and future (Hohepa, 2013). They are viewed as ardent supporters of Indigenous children, as well as a primary source of support for community members facing other concerns

and challenges (Frawley & Fasoli, 2012). Indigenous educational leaders need special leadership skills, cultural competencies, and sensitivities to function effectively in Indigenous cultural contexts (Hohepa, 2013).

### **3.3.2 Intercultural educational leadership framework**

Schools with students from different cultural backgrounds must have a leader with the intercultural leadership skills necessary for an intercultural environment (Frawley & Fasoli, 2012). Government primary schools in the Moroto district of Uganda are communities of Karamojong and non-Karamojong teachers and learners. Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff alike can learn to be intercultural teachers and leaders, and to work interculturally for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational outcomes. A number of spaces or spheres of influence have been identified as the sites for enacting intercultural capability. Frawley and Fasoli (2010) describe how:

**Interculturalism** is a bi-directional process where a shared understanding of the two cultures' knowledge systems must be developed for the teachers to collaborate effectively for educational achievements.

**Intercultural identity** is a collaborative process when leaders from both cultures learn to respect knowledge systems from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditions, including skills, language, knowledge, concepts, and understanding. Intercultural education focuses on reciprocal responsibility for curriculum, knowledge, policy, and authority.

**Intercultural service** highlights the importance of promoting and reinforcing values that support intercultural service at different levels, including the community, classroom, school, and central office. These values include respect, understanding, ethical behaviours, equality, and social justice.

**Intercultural community** acknowledges the plurality of community cultures, languages, and histories, as well as cultural customs, laws, and boundaries that require dedication to ongoing communication and relationship development. Community organizations gain skills in this area for collaborating, exchanging information, and discussing local issues to improve educational outcomes.

**Intercultural futures** emphasize how important it is for leaders to envision both a better present and a better future.

Redefined intercultural spheres of influence and intercultural capabilities are necessary to comprehend and function as an effective and successful leader in a multicultural environment, and these spheres of influence and capacities should be seen as organic and plastic rather than static (D'Arbon et al., 2009).

### **3.3.3 Indigenous Relatedness in Educational Context**

The concept of Indigenous relatedness emphasizes the importance of experiential education beyond the superficial understanding of the worldview. According to Holmes (2014), relatedness enables educators to go beyond the surface level of understanding and develop a deeper understanding of culture. This, in turn, provides both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants with a richer, educational experience. Holmes' research carried out in Aboriginal educational communities in Australia, discovered how the concept of relatedness can be incorporated in classroom settings. Moreover, he also flagged how the Western model of education is antithetical to the notions of relatedness within Indigenous Education.

The concept of relatedness serves as the basis for classroom operation and helps Indigenous teachers to relate and interact with their surroundings. It also helps them to be attentive to the situation, be observant, patient, and determined to complete the task, withstand discomfort, blend in, and listen. Storytelling about the community, responsibilities to relatives, and the immediate environment is one way of expressing relatedness (Holmes, 2014).

### **3.4 Summary**

This chapter has highlighted the difficulties associated with the definition of Indigeneity in Africa and Uganda. The second section of this chapter reviewed the extant literature on Indigenous education in Africa, primary formal education in Karamoja, and Indigenous educational leaders in remote schools. The last section of this chapter focused on the framework that informs my analysis. By using the concept of Indigenous relatedness and the Intercultural Educational Leadership Framework, we can gain insights into the leadership and practices carried out by the Karamojong teachers in Moroto primary schools. These concepts also provide us with the tools to develop solutions to the challenges faced by Karamoja school leaders and improve education service delivery in their communities.

## 4 Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological framework I used to design and carry out my research as well as my field experience. The choice of methods employed in this study are guided by the principles of Indegenous research ethics, which I discuss in the next section on Indigenous research paradigm.

Included in this chapter are details about, how I established relationship with the participants, how I selected participants, and data collection methods. The chapter also includes reflections on the validity of the data collected of ethical considerations, the researcher's reflexivity, and the difficulties I encountered in the field.

### 4.1 Indigenous research paradigm

Indigenous research paradigm involves protocols that guide researchers to follow ethical practices in the entire process of conducting research with Indigenous participants (Keskitalo, Olsen, & Virtanen, 2021, p. 71). It covers a range of practices beginning from the conception of the research idea, data-gathering process, writing and dissemination of findings. This research paradigm also relies on building relationships, reciprocal commitment, and respectful representation of the Indigenous community by the researcher (Keskitalo et al., 2021). These principles are essential because they ensure the researcher's accountability to the Indigenous Community (Chilisa, 2012). In Indigenous research, the Indigenous participants are part of the research process (Snow et al., 2016), and the Indigenous peoples' true voices and visions is put first by both the Indigenous researchers and the activists (Russell-Mundine, 2012). In this study, the Karamojong people's interests, knowledge, and experience were at the centre of both the research methodology and knowledge production.

Moroto District is situated at the foot of Mountain Moroto, with a town headquarters that is situated in Moroto town. The district is bordered by Kaabong District in the north, Amudat district to the south, Kenya to the east, Napak to the west, Nakapiriti district to the southwest, and Kotido district to the northwest (see Figure 1).

I chose to carry out my research in Moroto for three main reasons. First, the MoES reported in 2020 that UPE enrolment in Moroto was the lowest of the seven districts in Karamoja region with 8,427 learners (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020). These statistics attracted me to

explore the influence of the Karamojong teachers in Moroto to have increased enrolment and retention of learners in government primary schools like the other districts in the region. Second, at the time of my field visit, there were some communal conflicts in the other Karamojong districts, while Moroto district was relatively free from the communal conflicts. Third, it was less difficult to contact the key stakeholders in the region who can facilitate my access to the government primary schools in Moroto. Moroto has more than 20 government primary school, but only 15 are headed by Karamojong teachers. However, Karamojong teachers serve in other leadership capacities as Heads of Departments (HOD), Directors of Studies (DOS), and Deputy Headteachers (DH) in several schools in the Moroto district.

#### **4.2 Selection of Research Participants**

I used purposeful sampling to identify government primary schools within Moroto. In line with that, the selection of participants was limited to (a) Karamojong teachers in leadership positions, (b) should have more than two years of teaching experience, and (c) should have least one year of leadership experience. It was my first time in Moroto, so I requested the DEO's guidance in identifying Karamojong headed schools and contact information for the targeted recruitment of eligible participants. In total, ten of the 15 participants were school leaders, comprising three women and seven men.

The other five participants were parents selected to assess the caregivers' and parents' views on the leadership impact of the Karamojong school Leaders on the enrolment and retention of learners. I identified five parents for interviews through non-formal conversations; I met these parents in the places I went to seek guidance and inquiry, and I did not schedule an appointed time of discussion. The parents comprised of two men and three women. Two of the participants were neighbours to my host family, I met two at the PTA meeting, and I met the remaining parent at the DEO's office at the district headquarters.

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#### 4.3.1 Demographic Overview of Research Participants

Ten participants were Karamojong teachers involved in different leadership roles. My participants agreed to be involved in the study on condition of anonymity. Based on that, I am identifying them as SL1 through SL10.

Table 2 provides the summary of school leader participants' demographic information.

**Table 2**

##### *School Leaders Participants*

Number	Participants	Age range	Gender	Level Of Education	Administrative experience	Administrative roles
1	SL1	25-30	M	Grade III	2 years	Head of department
2	SL2	30-35	F	Grade IV	3 years	Deputy Headteacher
3	SL3	35-40	M	Bachelor's' Degree	3 years	Head teacher
4	SL4	30-35	M	Grade IV	1 year	Deputy Headteacher
5	SL5	30-35	M	Grade III	2 years	Head of Department
6	SL6	30-35	F	Grade IV	2 years	Deputy Headteacher
7	SL7	40 -45	M	Bachelor's' Degree	6 years	Headteacher
8	SL8	30-35	M	Grade V	4 years	Director of Studies

9	SL9	40 -45	F	Bachelor's Degree	3 years	Headteacher
10	SL10	20 -25	M	Grade III	4 years	Head of department

I highlighted the participants' age groups and levels of education to help me understand how their backgrounds influence their leadership practice. This presentation follows Grbich (2012) advice for the effective use of thick description of data for thematic analysis. Thick description gives readers a sense of the emotions, thoughts, and perceptions of participant's experience to build up a comprehensive picture of people in relation to their culture and environment.

In addition to the school leaders' interview, I also had non-formal conversations with parents to assess the leadership impact of school leaders on the enrolment and retention of learners in Moroto Municipality government primary schools. These five participants were coded as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. Table 3 provides the summary of parents' demographic information.

**Table 3**

*Summary of Parents' Demographics*

Number	Participants	Gender	Number of children in school	Occupation	Level of Education
1	P1	F	3	Political leader	High School
2	P2	F	6	accountant	Certificate
3	P3	M	3	Cattle herder	Primary
4	P4	F	4	Housewife	-
5	P5	M	5	Businessman	Primary

#### **4.4 Data Collection Methods**

I adopted a qualitative research approach to data collection. I collected data by observation, informal conversations, and qualitative interviews. Primary data was collected in Moroto district in the period between June and July 2022. In addition to the interview data, I took observation notes and field notes, as well as data gathered from secondary sources such as books, journals, and school reports. The choice of conducting interviews provided me enough time to interact and build relationship of trust with the community while observing some of the extra-curricular activities organized for students at the various schools in Moroto district.

#### **4.4.1 Qualitative interviews**

Qualitative data helps to gain a deeper understanding of the issues under exploration and enables researchers to get involved in sustaining and intensive experiences with participants (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The interview is a key instrument for collecting descriptive data about both historical and contemporary events and processes (Truong & Hallinger, 2017). Interviews help researchers to build rapport with the participants and to acquire viewpoints from various people (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

As mentioned previously, 10 Karamojong teachers in leadership positions were interviewed. All the interviews were conducted in English language. At first, the participants were not aware of the nature of my research because they had not received the project information before I met them. I spent 15-30 minutes explaining to them the objectives of my project before obtaining their consent to participate in the interview. The duration of each interview session was between 20 to 40 minutes. The interviews were held at the schools where the teachers work and comprised a series of 12 open-ended questions. This data collection enabled me to have an in-depth exploration of how teachers react to and make sense of experience and their opinions on the present study (Rothe, Ozegovic, & Carroll, 2009). Open-ended questions the participants are asked different question of different applications in whatever fits the scope of the study (Dana, Dawes, & Peterson, 2013). Under this approach I asked general questions on practices used by the teachers to attract and retain learners in school, participants were asked to elaborate on the challenges that limit their service delivery in managing schools, and to suggest ways on how their services in schools can be improved. I also used Semi-structured interviewing method approach to ask specific questions concerning of participants' level of education, their teaching and leadership experience.

#### **4.4.2 Informal Conversations**

"Informal conversations" refers to natural conversations and unstructured interviews (Swain & King, 2022). This approach is useful for researchers because it allows for relationship building that is non-hierarchical, trusting, and empathetic (Swain & Spire, 2020). This method helped me to have a deeper understanding of Karamojong parents on the impact of school leaders' practices on enrolment and retention of learners.

When I visited one of the schools, a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting was being held. The role of a PTA is to create a strong working bond between teachers and parents (Ratcliff &

Hunt, 2009). The meeting's main agenda was to encourage parents to take part in their children's academic progress, allow their children to attend school regularly, and provide them with learning materials. The head of the school introduced me to the parents as both a scholar and a teacher. This opportunity to have a casual conversation with the parents present about their perception of formal education practices and why they send their children to school was invaluable.

#### **4.4.3 Observation**

Observation allows the researcher to observe both human activities and the physical contexts in which such activities take place (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I used observation to reinforce the information obtained from the interviews I conducted with the school leaders. During that time, I took note of the learners' enrolment, their attendance, the number of teachers, and the classroom structures. I obtained this information from the register's books and attendance lists on the school's noticeboards. I also observed the teaching styles used in classrooms and confirmed that the government schools in the Karamoja region follow the same education curriculum as the rest of the country. My professional experience as a teacher who is responsible for this same curriculum positively influenced my observation in the field because it allowed me to be more sensitive and to compare and assess the data.

At the time of my fieldwork, all primary schools in Moroto municipality were taking part in a district-level MDD competition. This was an opportunity for me to observe how these school leaders relate with each other, how they handle stressful moments, and their commitment to have work done. This method also provided me with different perspective on how the Karamojong blend formal education with their culture outside the core subject curricula of Mathematics, English Language, Social Studies, and General Science.

#### **4.4.4 Secondary Sources**

Official school documents and reports published by the Ugandan government and NGOs were critical for my analysis of the responses from participants. I gathered secondary data from schools' admission books, register books, and teachers' attendance lists. I also read and took notes on such government documents as the DEO office reports, MoES reports on Education and Sport Sector strategic plan and reports by the Ministry for Karamoja Affairs on Karamoja Integrated Development Plan 2 for vision 2040. My analysis is also informed by MoES reports on low school enrolment of both boys and girls and low retention of girls in school and

UNICEF's 2015 report on education for all in Uganda. Such other written sources of data as school profiles, minutes of the meetings, newspapers, and memos were also used when relevant to the impact of government primary school leaders on the enrolment and retention of learners in schools in Moroto.

#### **4.5 Reliability and Validity**

Validity refers to the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision with which the findings accurately reflect the data, whereas reliability is the consistency in the analytical techniques (Noble & Smith, 2015). The goal of qualitative reliability is to capture the various ways that situations and occurrences might be interpreted and understood, and there are four main categories of validity, namely face validity, content validity, construct validity, and criterion-related validity (Oluwatayo, 2012). Reliability and validity are key aspects in determining the credibility of a study's design, study findings, and analysis (Golafshani, 2003).

This study employed various strategies to ensure its validity. I employed and designed different methodological strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings. In other words, I adopted a strategy of triangulating three different, complementary primary data collection methods: observation method, structured interviews, and informal conversations. I followed up with participants to verify the accuracy of the data I transcribed. Along with all these methods, I also leveraged my professional leadership experience managing schools in Uganda to create a close relationship between the researcher and participants to ensure a thick, rich description of my topic of study over the period I spent in the field.

#### **4.6 Ethical Considerations**

According to Olsen in (Drugge, 2016) research ethics are the decisions taken before, during and after research is completed. Ethical issues are very important in research to ensure research is done with integrity and in a practical sense (Chilisa, 2012). The ethical principles of responsibility, reciprocity, and respect guided the conception of my research idea and my conduct in the fieldwork process. Before going to the field, I obtained approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) and obtained an introduction letter from the Centre for Sami Studies explaining the relevancy of the field research. I took the introduction letter to the Chief Administration Officer (CAO) in Moroto District, who is responsible for all administrative operations. He inquired about the intentions of my research and how relevant my project was to the community. I gave him a copy of my project proposal; he later referred

me to the DEO and the Inspector of Schools for primary schools. During my one-on-one conversation with the DEO, he explained the situation of formal education in Moroto and Karamoja region. The DEO was explicit that although the provision of formal education in the Karamoja region had increased, few Karamojong teachers meet the requirements set by the MoES for the Headteacher's role. He gave me instructions of travel and conduct and a list of government primary schools in Moroto municipality that had Karamojong teachers in leadership positions.

When I arrived at Moroto, I obtained written approval from the district leaders, which I presented to the heads of the schools before meeting the school leaders. I also sought both oral and written consent from the participants. In doing that, I explained to them the purpose of my research. I informed them of their rights to withdraw their consent at any time. Even though the interview data did not contain sensitive information that may be harmful to the research participants, I took steps to ensure that participants' names are never mentioned in the findings and discussion.

#### **4.6.1 Reflexivity**

Qualitative research has many advantages, but it also introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As the researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analyses, interprets, and reports the findings, evaluating the impact of the researcher's background, perspective, experiences, ideological biases, and interests during the research is essential to establish the credibility of the results (Kwame, 2017). I am not from the ethnic group of the Karamojong. I am from the Baganda tribe nurtured from central part of Uganda. Although from this valid standpoint, I am an outsider researcher, I am also a teacher by profession and have been a headteacher of a public secondary school in Uganda. This experience helped me to gain access and acceptance among my participants.

However, by being an outsider, I am aware that the way I phrase the research questions and my subsequent analysis of the findings may be influenced by non-indigenous worldviews and perceptions about the Karamojong People. Additionally, being a researcher from one of the dominant ethnic groups in Uganda creates an imbalanced power relations between the Karamojong participants and I. However, throughout this research process, I have made efforts to adhere to the principle of Indigenous research ethics by ensuring that the thesis respectfully represents the Karamojong People and their experiences from their own voices. In that way,

my potential bias will have less influence on the findings presented. I am also presenting my final work to the district public library in Moroto district as a way of reporting back to the Karamojong community.

#### **4.7 Challenges**

No research study is without its challenges. This study faced four main challenges related to miscommunication, contract negotiations, language, and transportation.

In one of the visited schools, the Headteachers was not a Karamojong, an important stakeholder felt discriminated against by my presence: “Karamojong teachers are not the only leaders that have impacted on the enrolment and retention of learners in schools, why are you discriminating us?” This perception was short lived; the DEO intervened to inform them that I was an independent researcher with a specific scope of study, and when I further clarified the purpose of data the miscommunication was resolved.

Some participants seemed shy to speak to a stranger about issues concerning their working experience. Although they did not decline to answer these questions, they provided short answers. When I tried to intervene, I could feel the resistance from respondents and that I was making them uncomfortable by going beyond my boundaries. I later learned that a potential salary increment strike for teachers in Uganda fostered fear among them about discussing such matters.

Another limitation that I experienced in the field was a language barrier when trying to effectively communicate with some parents in the field. Having a background and language that was different from the Karamojong, I had limited access to some participants. In places outside the school, my hosts were helpful to translate for me.

Finally, I used a motorcycle (“boda-boda”) in the field because it was the only transport means available in the area. It was expensive and tiresome for long distances. It had been a long time since I had last used a motorcycle. It was somewhat uncomfortable; they were dusty roads and sometimes muddy when it rained. Overall, I am confident that this was a valuable experience because I was able to face life like more like my participants and better appreciate the physical environment of the region and how it plays a role in Karamojong culture.

#### **4.8 Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of how an Indigenous research methodology was operationalized for the present qualitative study of leadership practices by Karamojong teachers and their influence on the enrolment and retention of learners in government primary schools in Moroto. Ten participants were purposefully selected from school leaders as well as five convenience sampled parents. Individual interviews were conducted alongside informal conversations, observation method, and the analysis is informed by a broad range of secondary sources that includes not only scholarly works, but also government and NGO reports.



## 5 Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents and analyses the data collected during fieldwork in Moroto municipality in north-eastern Uganda. I present the organisational structure of the government primary schools in Moroto, the leadership practices that influence the enrolment and retention of learners, the perception of the parents on the practices done by the school leaders, and the challenges that hinder the school leaders' service delivery. Interviews, observation notes, and informal conversations generated data to answer four central questions: (a) What practices do Karamojong school leaders use to retain old and attract new learners in Moroto municipality schools? (b) How do parents perceive Karamojong school leaders? (c) What challenges persist in the enrolment and retention of the school learners? (d) What can be done by school leaders to address these challenges?

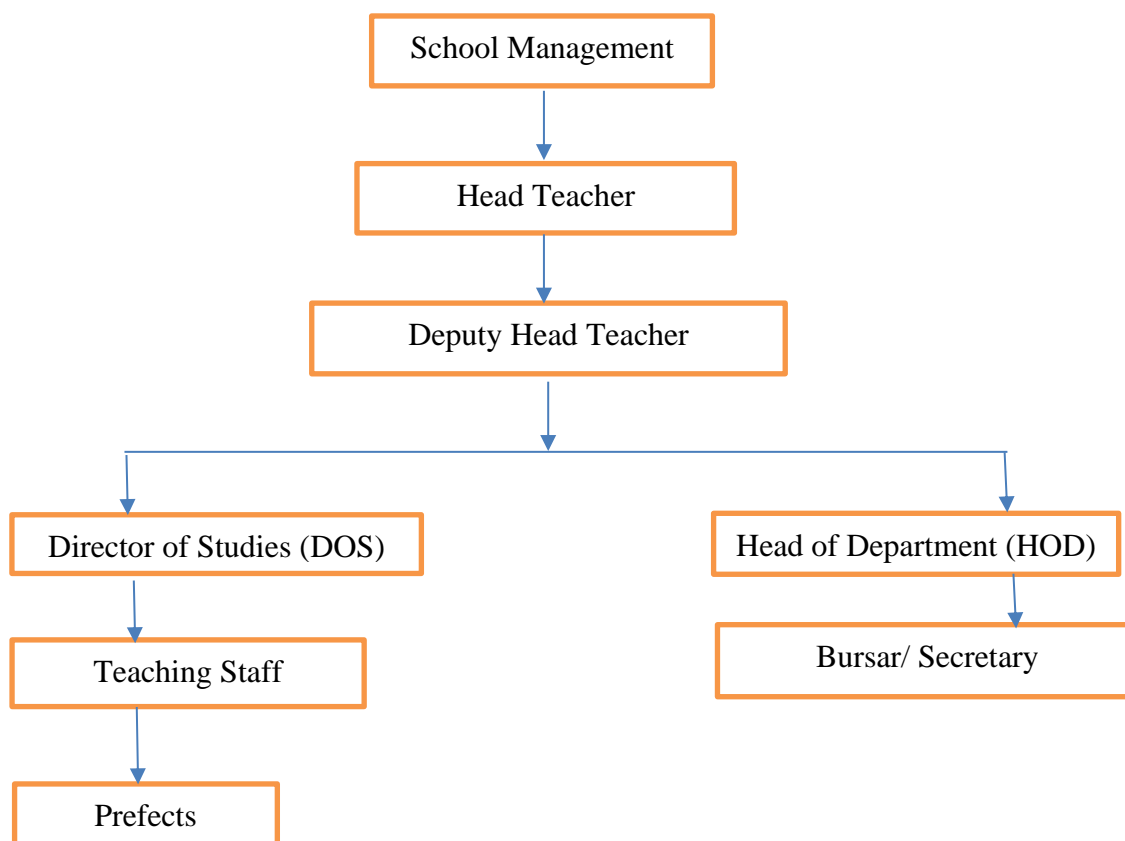
The presentation and discussion of the data is also informed by the secondary literature and elements of the conceptual framework as discussed in the previous chapter.

### 5.1 Description of the schools and their organisational structure

The research participants were selected from government-funded schools. All these schools were co-ed, and the sample included both day and boarding schools. All the schools followed the same curriculum: mathematics, English, science, and social studies for upper primary (level 5-7), whereas students in lower primary (level 1-4) are taught a thematic curriculum covering lessons in reading, writing, English language, mathematics, science, and social studies. The schools also share a common organisational structure and are governed by the School Management Committee (SMC). The SMC has the overall responsibility of running the schools in accordance with the 1969 Education Act. The teaching staff are headed by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher(s), as well as several DOS and HODs. At the lower level of the organizational hierarchy are the teaching staff, school bursar, and secretary. Under the teaching staff are the student leadership team (school prefects). This organisational hierarchy is represented in Figure 3.

#### Figure 3

*Primary School Management in Moroto*



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

## 5.2 Karamojong school leaders' best practices to foster enrolment and retention.

The research participants identified several practices they carry out in schools that can be categorized into five themes, namely academic performance; co-curricular activities; provision of meals; guidance and counselling; and education campaigns.

### 5.2.1 Academic Performance

It is crucial to create a safe and supporting learning environment to promote positive, social, and emotional wellbeing as well as positive academic outcomes for all learners (Saggers, 2020). In other words, creating a nurturing, positive, and attractive learning environment improves academic performance. Two of the ten school leaders acknowledged the importance of emphasising academic performance if learners are to be retained in a school.

In 2018, I read in the newspapers [that] Karamoja region performed poorest in the PLE results in Uganda. This report about our region melted my heart. As a professional teacher, I believe I can do something to change the performance in our region. [O]ne of the strategies [that] we introduced [is] boarding sections for candidates and semi-candidates for pupils to have time for continuous study and revision. (SL2)

Further, Participant SL8 discussed the impact of their school's introduction of extra lessons:

We introduced extra early morning lessons and evening after classes for primary six and seven. Similarly, other classes are given daily homework to keep them focused on their studies. We also give them holiday packages for long holidays, weekly tests and engage pupils in continuous revisions.

My analysis and observations support these school leaders' claims that strategy can produce positive outcomes. One of the sample school's Primary Leaving Examinations results from 2019 to 2021 showed that all learners qualified for post primary education when the school created an attractive learning environment. Parents are attracted to take their children where they are sure that at the end of the primary level their children will be able to pass with good grades. Many Karamojong learners come from homes with illiterate parents who are not motivated to help their children take schoolwork seriously. Research shows that extra lessons help weak learners to catch up with their colleagues by boosting their learning ability (Ha, Tuan, Harpham, Lan, & McCoy, 2005).

### **5.2.2 Co-curricular Activities**

Co-curricular activities supplement and enhance the academic curriculum. They are typically planned outside of regular class hours and the goal of fostering interests and to develop skills beyond the classroom. Arts and culture co-curricular activities comprise music, dance, drama, and art to provide opportunities for students to develop artistic abilities and explore different forms of expression. Athletics and sports co-curricular activities like football and running help students not only improve their physical fitness, but also develop teamwork and leadership skills. Finally, academic clubs and organisations refer to science clubs, math clubs, debate clubs, and literary societies that provide opportunities for students to explore their academic interests and deepen their understanding of various subjects (Koehn, 2019; Smith, (2018).). At the educational institution level teachers in Uganda are trained to develop engaging lessons and content for learners in the co-curricular area. Co-curricular activities were supported by three of the ten participants. I observed teachers engaging learners with jumping and running at the lower primary level.

When I asked participant SL1 about the benefits of co-curricular activities, he replied:

Not all learners are motivated to study by class lesson work. They are those learners with special abilities and talents in singing, dancing, playing football. My role as HOD for cocurricular activities is to help learners discover their abilities and talents.

Participants SL5 presented a similar view and stated that they had games and sports every evening after classes for 45 minutes. SL7 said:

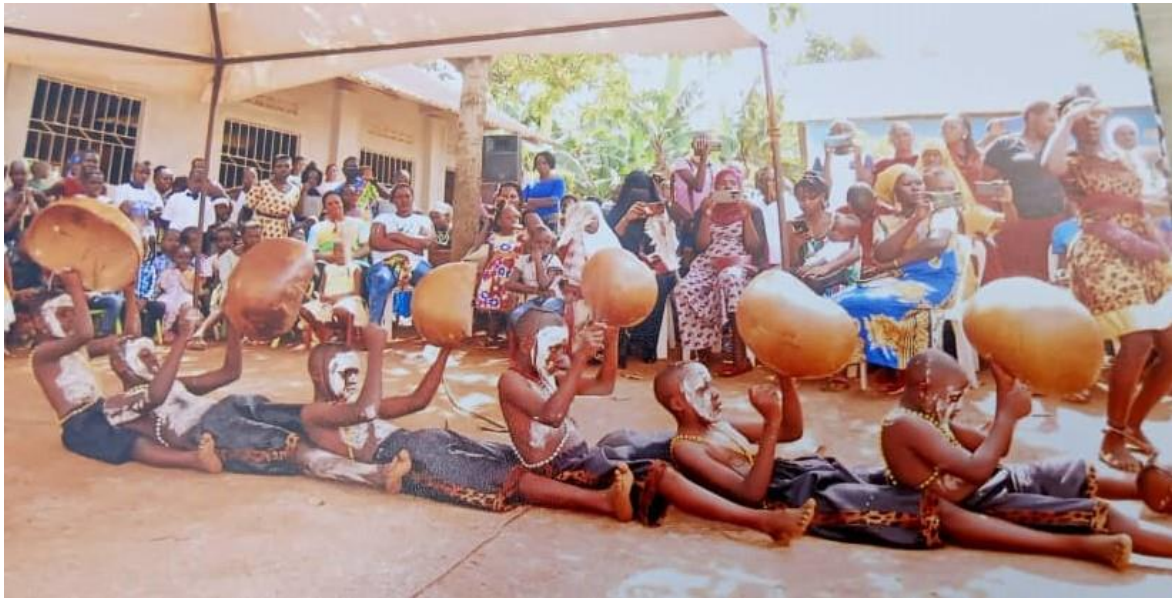
We engage our learners in Music, Dance, and Drama. We make learners sing and play dramas portraying the benefits of being in school and the outcome of being educated. We also train them to read traditional poems to promote the Karamojong culture and norms.

Karamojong School leaders use MDD to pass on information to the Karamojong parents. MDD is one of the rich and engaging co-curricular activity that promotes Karamojong culture and norms and motivates learners to attend school. Indigenous people of other regions also use MDD to pass on cultural principals and norms and revitalize their culture. For example, Gaski (2008) writes about Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, a Sami culture and language revitalizer activist, who used music and poetry to promote Sami and other Indigenous people's cultures.

Cocurricular activities help learners develop confidence, socialize, and connect with each other in the school community Mancha and Ahmad (2016) assert that co-curricular activities give pupils the opportunity to develop communication skills while giving them grounds to establish relationships with classmates. During my fieldwork, I observed teamwork practices among learners when they engage in both drama and sports.

Figure 4

*Karamojong pupils performing a cultural dance on their speech day*



Source: Researcher's fieldwork (June 2022).

### 5.2.3 Provision of meals

Karamoja is among the poorest regions in the world and been dependent on food aid for over four decades (Brown et al., 2017). Nearly 80 percent of the families in the region do not have enough food for their households. Their situation is compounded by the harsh climate in Karamoja. The scarcity of food in the Karamoja region makes learners abscond from school in search of food and water. Teachers in Moroto collaborate with such NGOs as World Food Program to provide food for the learners at school as a way of attracting pupils. Three of the ten participants identified the provision of meals as an effective strategy to retain learners in schools daily. I asked these participants how the provision of meals attracts learners to attend school. Participant SL4 replied:

As you may know, Karamoja region experiences a semi-arid climate. We do not grow much food in our land, so many families cannot afford two meals a day. Therefore, food is a strong attraction of children to school because [they are assured] of [a] second plate of food.

Participant SL6 and SL10 had similar responses. SL6 said:

[The] majority of families eat rice and meat<sup>6</sup> on public holidays like Christmas and Easter. Meals, as such, when served in schools, create memories for pupils and a desire to attend school.

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<sup>6</sup> Meals of rice and meat are a delicacy in most regions of Uganda.

This response indicates that the provision of meals at school is a better strategy for encouraging school attendance in a region where poverty is endemic. My observations of the meals were that learners were served tea and porridge for breakfast and posho<sup>7</sup> and beans for lunch.

## Figure 5

*Learners in Moroto Lining Up for Meals*



Source: Researcher's fieldwork (June 2022).

### 5.2.4 Guidance and counselling

Historical and environmental conflicts have increased the rate of marginalization in Karamoja (Brown et al., 2017). Professionally, teachers are taught skills to coach and mentor troubled learners. Guidance and counselling to rehabilitate learners and keep them in school is held regularly, with special attention given to troubled and traumatized learners. School leaders who participated in the research interview agreed that guidance and counselling is critical for student retention.

I observed that counselling sessions were conducted both individually and in groups (gender basis, class basis). When I inquired about this, SL3 told me:

We prefer conducting individual guidance and counselling because learners go through different challenges. We also noted that some are not comfortable to open up to us in the presence of their colleagues. So, we thought [that] handling them differently will help us to know each learners' area that needs attention and the

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<sup>7</sup> An East African food product made of cornmeal.

appropriate solution to each challenge. Individual learners are selected according to individual behaviours related to their attendance in their respective classes.

Participant SL2, SL4, and SL6 reported that their schools also provide counselling to parents and guardians on how to help their children have a better academic and social future. Participant SL7 reported:

I always give special attention to individual learners to make them feel special to me. This alone makes them accountable to be in class and regular at school.

Participants SL1 told me that learners are often grouped according to gender for health and hygiene counselling. When I asked Participant SL10 why the learners are grouped according to gender, he responded:

When we talk to girls, we normally tell them to abstain from sex to avoid early pregnancies and contacting sexually transmitted diseases.

I also inquired if they had invited professional guest speakers in to offer guidance and counselling.

We do not invite guest counsellors; they are quite expensive to facilitate. However, we have formulated guidance and counselling committees. This involves all the teachers. (SL5)

Karamojong teachers use guidance and counselling to address complex difficulties impacting learners, including social, psychological, and academic concerns. The civil wars in Karamoja left trauma that affects learners' concentration and mental abilities in class, and counselling aims to shape behavioural changes in children to maintain discipline among learners in schools (Nzoka & Orodho, 2014). Karamojong school leaders' practices are supported by the findings of Mulenga and Mukaba (2018) that guidance and counselling help learners to contain pressure and stigma from their peers.

### **5.2.5 Education campaigns**

Education campaigns are a school community engagement strategy used to develop and empower communities about the benefits of literacy. All participants acknowledged that they conducted education awareness campaign in the district about the value of formal education to

the learners and parents. These campaigns, spearheaded by the local government and UNATO<sup>8</sup> through activities like PTA meetings, speech days, and home visitations, target learners who are irregular and late. Enhancing community-school relationships is crucial to keep learners in school, as they may otherwise resort to recreational activities.

Community education campaigns foster authentic engagement and promote decision-making skills among stakeholders. These campaigns involve both the community and school beneficiaries and encourage parents to support their children's education. While in the field, I observed school leaders at PTA meetings encouraging parents to support their children in matters of school, maintain dialogues with teachers, and follow up on the study progress of their children. Although the PTA's role in enrolment and retention is supported by Justin and Ogada (2021), who maintain that it promotes mutual respect, peaceful relationships, and cooperation among stakeholders, no participants discussed these strategies in either the interviews or the informal conversations.

#### **5.2.6 Summary**

Karamojong school leaders employ a range of practices supported by empirical research to improve student enrolment and retention in primary schools. Schools in Moroto provide extra supports for academic performance, like additional lessons, co-curricular activities, like music and drama, quality meals, like rice and meat, and guidance counselling to attract students and keep them in classes regularly. They also employ education awareness programs but reported little about their effectiveness. Participants spoke positively of the impact of these first four kinds of initiatives on learners, but do Karamojong parents agree?

#### **5.3 Parents' perceptions of the practices of Karamojong school leaders**

Namukwaya and Kibirige (2019) found a correlation between parents' literacy and their willingness to participate in school programs. In other words, parents with no or little educational background are less likely to motivate their children to enrol in school. The description of parents' perception about practices done by the school leaders reflects the quality and frequency of the information they receive regarding the education of their children through such channels as teacher-learner relationships, school fees, parental involvement in decision

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<sup>8</sup> Teachers in Uganda are unionized and are represented by the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU). The union negotiates on behalf of teachers regarding salaries, benefits, working conditions, and carry out educational campaigns to all children between 6 and 18 years to go back school (Uganda National Teachers' Union, 2003).



making, and value attached to culture. The data discussed in this section was gathered through informal conversation with parents, and those conversations targeted more information about what was being said in the interviews with school leaders. For example, these conversations revealed that some parents are opposed to extra lessons for two main reasons even when a parent is motivated to support their child's education. First, because they create pressure on children and prevent them from getting enough resting time for recreation. Second, because extra lessons are expensive and require extra payments that families cannot afford. These findings confirm the results of Santhi (2011) that extra lessons place great pressure on learners as well teachers.

### **5.3.1 Teacher-Learners Relationships**

In schools where teacher-learner relationships were strong, parents felt safe to entrust their children to the school. Participant P1 elaborated:

My children's teachers are approachable and available for the children. My children tell me teachers talk to them about various circumstances in their lives. I am happy to know how supportive and encouraging teachers are to the learners.

Another Karamojong parent said that a positive relationship between teachers and learner gives them confidence to care less about their children while they are at school.

Personally, I have never gone to school to check on the performance of my children or even to attend any PTA meetings. I know my children are safe in school. I trust teachers to instruct and teach our children what they are supposed to learn. Teachers visit us at home and call me when the children are absent from school. (P2)

The findings above indicate that when the teacher-learner relationship is strong, Indigenous parents develop trust and confidence with Indigenous teachers, parents' perceptions about education improve, and Indigenous learners confide in their teachers who act as their mentors (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2019). Santoro and colleagues (2011), however, flag how Indigenous teachers bear the burden of all aspects of Indigenous children and are subject to high expectations from parents and the general community, but their workload often goes unrecognized.

### **5.3.2 School Fees**

Some parents were generally happy about the efforts by school leaders to improve primary education enrolment in Moroto. The most common and persistent complaints parents raised

were about additional fees for school supplies, uniforms, exercise books, and school development projects. While the government covers for tuition fees, requirements that are directly used by the learners are the responsibility of parents in Uganda:

I am a single mother of five children; it strains me to meet all requirements for my children. I do not have money to buy books and uniforms for all the children. My husband was killed in a civil war between the Karamojong and Iteso. It's hard for me to feed the children as well as provide all their school requirements. (P2)

To add on that participant (P3) said that:

I have 9 children from two wives I cannot afford to pay basic fees to all children what I decided is to enrol only three.

Despite the relevancy of the extra activities offered by the school leaders to the learners, parents find it difficult to enrol their children in school because they cannot afford to purchase such requirements as textbooks and sportswear. Whereas NGOs are actively involved in the distribution of foodstuffs in Moroto to support child welfare, the region receives little to no external financial aid to help defray these costs.

### **5.3.3 Parental involvement in school decision-making**

Indigenous parents who attended hostile and intimidating schools are often reluctant to get involved in their children's education for lack of aspiration (Santoro et al., 2011). In other words, some parents who attended a school where "mistakes" were punished prefer to spare their children similar hardships. When Indigenous parents are involved in a school decision making process, their sense of belonging is improved (Santoro et al., 2011). Parent participants in this study acknowledged that the Moroto schools I visited allow them to take part in decisions concerning their children and appreciated the importance of this strategy. I asked Participant P2 why she chose to attend the PTA meeting:

We are always invited to PTA meetings at least once a term. In these meetings we were told about the weaker areas of our children and how to help them improve.

Participant P2 further elaborated on the relevance of parents in school decision-making of the school:

The involvement of the parents in decision-making bridges the gap between the parents and the school management. It is also important to involve us, the parents, before any decision is made especially regarding fees charged for extra lessons

and other administrative fees. When charges are too high, parents may not afford and eventually affect the attendance of the children.

I observed parents in a PTA meeting taking part in a discussion concerning the growth and development of school and performance of their children.

#### **5.3.4 Erosion of traditional culture**

Historically, Karamoja feared the formal school system because of their perception that formal education will affect their culture. In the past, schools were aggressive to their culture making them mistrust the education provided by the government (Brown et al., 2017). Some Indigenous parents still are concerned about schools introducing practices that devalue their culture and language. In the conversation I had with the neighbours at my host home, Participant 5 told me why his children were out of school:

School education is preventing our children from learning and practicing the traditional culture. Much as they involve the learners in Music, Dance and Drama, it is not enough because most of their teachers are not Karamojong.

Participant 4 further shared a similar assessment:

Our children have been assimilated to western culture! Children no longer want to speak Karamojong language. Some educated children feel ashamed to be called Karamojong. Others have diverted from the cultural dress.

Participant P3 was not satisfied with the long completion process of formal education compared to their traditional education, hands-on education:

Formal education I really don't understand it. It takes longer for a child to complete. Teachers are just copying everything from the colonists. It is not promoting our culture like making beads, weaving baskets, mats, and other tradition[al] practices.

My field work indicates that some parents want formal primary schools to integrate practical, hands-on traditional skills into classroom instruction. This data is supported by research conducted with pastoralists worldwide who, having attained formal education, recognize that traditional approaches to learning are no longer effective in equipping children with skills to survive in modern economies (Brown et al., 2017).

#### **5.4 Challenges affecting enrolment and retention**

Enrolment and retention of primary school learners in Moroto has improved over the past years, although not to the same extent as other regions of Uganda. During the interviews with school

leaders, each participant was asked to discuss the day-to-day challenges they face when trying to register and keep Karamojong children in schools. They identified four main barriers to their delivery of quality primary education to all, namely low incentives for Karamojong teachers, parents' attitudes toward children's education, understaffing, and insufficient classroom space and other physical infrastructure.

#### **5.4.1 Low incentives for Karamojong teacher**

Four of the ten school leaders interviewed agreed that teachers' incentives are poor, and that a lack of logistical and financial support strains their abilities to perform their duties<sup>9</sup>. For example, Participant SL7 shared:

Absenteeism of teachers is a serious challenge in this school. Most of our teachers do not come from within this area. They reside in nearby towns and districts of Nakapipiriti and Soroti. This is because the school has no staff quarters to accommodate all the teachers. The long travel distance and costs involved cannot allow them to be present at school daily. Besides, they use those days off to do side income businesses to top up on their salary to be able to support their families.

Participant SL10 also expressed his dissatisfaction with the current incentives to recruit and keep qualified teachers in Moroto classrooms:

Teachers are not supported by the Ministry. The Ministry does not cater for the welfare of teachers; teachers are not given meals at school; they normally work on [an] "empty stomach." There is also an issue of housing; teachers' houses were constructed way back and never been renovated. The houses are cracked, without electricity, and when it rains, they leak. So, how do you expect a teacher working under such conditions to perform?

#### **5.4.2 Understaffing**

Several participants wanted to discuss the effects of understaffing and the hiring of unqualified instructors on the quality of primary education delivered in Moroto. Participant SL9 provided specific details about how understaffing impacts their school:

At this school, the ministry employed only eight teachers to handle all the classes. This number of teachers is very small for a primary school. Teachers have too much workload to handle. One day, a teacher missed class, and the whole day learners went back home unattended to because the available teachers were

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<sup>9</sup> The salary of teachers in Uganda varies depending on their level of education and experience. The starting salary for a primary school teacher with a grade III certificate in education is UGX 499,684 (about USD 132) per month (Ministry of Public Service, 2022). In comparison to other professional careers in Uganda, the salaries of teachers are generally low, about 20% of the average salary of a university graduate (World Bank, 2008).

extremely engaged. This situation made us hire unqualified senior four and senior six teachers to help us with workload.

Participant SL8 confirmed that these circumstances are not unique to one school and that the MoES and the district also failed to give their school enough teachers such that they too resorted to be hiring incompetent or under-qualified instructors for the very same level of learners: “We always employ people who ended up in senior four and senior six.”

### **5.4.3 Inadequate infrastructure**

The school leaders also explained how the limited success at raising enrolment and attendance in the Karamoja region has overtaxed the available school infrastructure. Although there were regional programs underway to construct schools, dormitories, latrines, and staff houses coordinated by the office of the Prime Minister on the development of education in Karamoja region, work has been slow (Brown et al., 2017). Two of the ten participants discussed this deficiency as a major barrier to raising school enrolment in their areas.

We have many children, especially in lower primary with limited classrooms. The size and number of classrooms cannot contain the current numbers of learners. We also don't have enough desk or chairs for learners. (SL4)  
Because the classrooms are not enough several learners attend lessons while standing at the back of the classes and outside classes through the windows. We have had cases of learners fighting for seats and the weak eventually lose interest of coming to school. (SL5)

My fieldwork observations confirm how primary schools in Moroto have had to adapt to inadequate infrastructure in ways that limit the delivery of quality education to Karamoja learners. In one of the schools, I watched learners taking lessons under the mango trees and on the playgrounds due to insufficient classrooms and furniture. In another school, classes were taught in shifts; while one group of learners attended a class, others were engaged in such outdoor curricular activities as sports and games to keep them busy. I did not witness any aggression or confrontations between learners for the scarce resources.

### **5.4.4 Parental attitudes toward learners' education**

The community perceptions towards education are at conflict with the household economy in the Karamoja region. Parents can afford to send their children to schools only “when household demands in terms of farming activities and fending for food have been met” (Brown et al., 2017, p. 9). During the interview, school leaders reported that some parents had negative attitudes towards formal education that impact children's academic success.

Parents neglect their responsibilities towards their children. Some of our parents do not provide exercise books, pens, or school uniforms to their children. A learner can be in class without book while the parent is not bothered. We used to send them back home, we later realized that parents were unbothered the more. (SL3)

I observed many children who did not have proper or full school uniforms or shoes in several schools. Previous research also points to lack of proper uniforms as a serious barrier to primary education for low income of households (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014b). The impact of footwear, in particular, was emphasised by Participant SL6:

Most of the children walk long distances from their homes to school without shoes. We had the case of a boy who dropped out of school because his feet were hurting. Some parents, I believe, can afford shoes for their children, but [they] are affected by historical factors. They view wearing shoes for special occasions, of which schooling is [not] of them.

In other schools, school leaders reported a general lack of cooperation between some parents and the school administration:

We have parents who are not concerned about following up on their children's performance. Such parents do not even turn up for PTA meetings. (SL2).

The PTA meeting that I attended did, indeed, have a low parent turn-out rate (see Figure 6). The overall number of children were 781 and the turn-out were 11 parents. When I asked Participant SL1 to comment on the low attendance at the meeting, he replied:

Generally, having this number of parents in the meeting is a big achievement; it's not easy to mobilize them. Some claim to be working in their farms, while others seem not to [be] interest[ed]. Sometime back, I visited a parent of a girl who usually misses school. Her parents informed me that she misses school to take care of her siblings at home.

## **Figure 6**

### *Parents at a PTA Meeting*



Source: Researcher's fieldwork (June 2022)

The data from my fieldwork confirms with previous research: parents send their kids to school and then pull them out to tend cows, carry firewood to towns, and complete other necessary household tasks. This is not to say that parents do not appreciate the value of education but that household needs compete with school attendance. Households rely on children's labour to provide food in homes, and household incomes are too often too low meet children's school requirements. The kids who succeed most likely to succeed are those who receive aid from an organisation (Datzberger, 2022). Many parents among my participants admitted to having received aid from NGO. The aid, however, was mainly targeting the needy, especially the disabled children. Karamoja region has nearly twenty NGOs that support 29 different education projects to enable the Karamojong Indigenous community to attain formal education (Catley, Stites, Ayele, & Arasio, 2021). Aid from NGOs complements the government "Education for all" UPE program.

## **5.5 Summary**

This chapter presents the findings of the present study as a thick, rich description of the schools within Moroto district. It discusses their organisational structure and uses participants' own words to answer three of the research questions and drive analysis. First, the chapter identified Karamojong school leaders' practices to promote retention and enrolment of learners. Next, it reported parents' perception of the school leaders' practices. Last, it provided an overview of the main challenges encountered by the school leaders in service delivery: poor incentives, inadequate infrastructure, parental attitudes, and poverty.





## 6 Discussion

This chapter discusses the fourth research question: how can Karamojong school leaders be helped to improve their service delivery? The discussion is structured into two sections. The first focuses on the school leaders' reported opinions about how to better their service delivery in schools. The school leaders proposed that the government should sensitize parents about their responsibilities, improve the professional development of the teaching staff, and construct study buildings. The second section discusses the findings through the lens of the intercultural leadership framework and Indigenous relatedness in educational settings.

### 6.1 Raise awareness about parental responsibilities

Previous research attributes the low formal education attainment in Kotido District to the negative attitudes of some parents (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2019). School leader participants emphasised their beliefs that sensitisation on parents' role is an effective strategy to better their service delivery. They argued that when parents understand their obligations to support the formal education of their children, learners will stay in school longer, be more motivated to do their schoolwork, and have better learning outcomes. The teachers informed me that parents cared about their children being in school but not about the requirements for their children to participate in school. I observed that some learners lacked writing books, pens, and walked barefooted; others did not have school uniforms. This inadequate support from their parents or guardians strains school leaders and teachers.

Yes, the government of Uganda introduced UPE to all school-going children, [but] it does not provide learning materials to the learners. It is the parents' responsibility to provide learning materials to their children and to provide lunch to them. But this is not the case with some parents. They have not played their roles; everything has been left in the hands of the school, which has made our work as teachers hectic. I, therefore, plead to the government of Uganda through the Ministry of Education and Sports to sensitize the parents on their role [in] their children's education. (SL10)

The findings of the present study show not only that Karamojong parents often do fail to meet their responsibilities toward their children's education, but also that this is not necessarily out of neglect. Indeed, parents spoke of both fear of erosion of traditional culture and poverty as equally important factors limited attendance. The MoES should set motivational measures like allow parents to volunteer in the school and develop awareness campaigns to familiarize parents about both their rights and obligations.

## **6.2 More and better professional development**

The MoES in collaboration with the international NGO Norwegian Teacher Initiative introduced refresher courses on school leadership and management in June 2021 to strengthen the capacity of teacher training institutions ((UNESCO, 2021). These programs have not been effective, especially in the rural areas of the country. For example, the Moroto DEO informed me that although there are opportunities for Karamojong teachers to head the primary schools in Moroto, few meet the qualifications to be headteachers. The school leaders I interviewed proposed that special scholarships and funding should be offered to practicing Karamojong teachers solve the challenge of incompetent teachers by developing the current teachers and improving their qualifications.

The Ministry should provide funding to the practicing teachers through in-service programs. Additionally, refresher courses should be to teachers as well as leaders in a period of two years and continuous workshops to help teachers improve their skills. (SL3)

The Ministry of Education and Sports should orient teachers in the new programs that are being implemented for proper implementations. (SL7)

Investment in professional development has the potential to address two challenges to enrolment and retention of learners. First, it will increase on the number of teachers in leadership and their general competencies. Second, as argued by the Indigenous educational leadership perspective, the increase of Karamojong teachers in the region would amplify the importance of formal education to the Karamojong children and build critical connections with the Indigenous community. The Karamojong teachers and school leaders, once equipped with the leadership skills, will have the cultural competency and sensitivity necessary to perform effectively as supporters and not just educators of Indigenous children.

## **6.3 Construction of school buildings**

The most obvious challenges in the schools I visited was the shortage of school buildings. The Ugandan government has invested in some new construction, but the existing structures are inadequate for the number of pupils enrolled. When I asked the participants to resolve this problem, most called on the Government of Uganda and donors to renovate and construct more classrooms and staff quarters for the teachers to address both the absenteeism of teachers and to create a more conducive learning environment. Many emphasized how properly constructed classrooms boost teachers' creativity, a claim supported by Mulyana (2021).

#### **6.4 Indigenous education in formal setting**

This section applies the conceptual framework to identify, discuss, and analyse the potential solutions to improve primary education service delivery in Karamoja region. My discussions with the parents on their perception on the practices done by the Karamojong school leaders to attract learners revealed that the education currently delivered to the learners is more theoretical, and Karamojong parents prefer their children to learn more practical education than the classroom. They fear the loss of their culture and traditions to foreign culture, and some of their teachers are indeed from outside Karamoja region. Learning should involve informal activities like storytelling in Indigenous contexts and be informed by Indigenous ways of knowing and value a holistic understanding of humans in relation to the physical, spiritual, and natural worlds (Wotherspoon, 2015).

#### **6.5 Indigenous relatedness learning**

Indigenous relatedness in an education setting is the mechanism by which learning in formal education is related to the Indigenous education (Holmes, 2014). Participants 4 and 5 did not agree with the formal education and insisted that formal education erodes the Karamojong traditional culture and practices. This is a clear example of how Indigenous relatedness should be incorporated into the classroom setting to create connectiveness. Education should be based on experience (Holmes (2014), and Karamojong school leaders are in the right position to adopt Indigenous relatedness in their teaching practices and go beyond superficial conceptions of worldviews to provide a deeper understanding of culture, but non-indigenous teachers can also be taught how to integrate the concept into the educational experience (Holmes, 2014).

In the informal conversations that I had with the Karamojong parents, I learned that children miss their traditional culture and practices. It will help the Karamojong teachers to relate and interact with existing environment and be attentive to the situation. This practice is expressed in storytelling, which enables the Karamojong children to be observant, patient, and determined to complete any given task. The learners will gain the ability to withstand discomfort, learn how to adopt, and listen. Parents complained that formal education is more theoretical and takes long for children to complete. Indigenous relatedness will help learners relate their traditional practices within formal or western educational practices.

## **6.6 Intercultural leadership practices**

Frawley and Fasoli (2012) flagged how intercultural leadership skills are critical for efficient leadership practice in school settings where multiple culture knowledge systems coexist. Moroto is a multicultural municipality and so are its primary schools. Schoolteachers from different backgrounds attending both to Karamojong pupils and non-indigenous children. In such a context, everyone working in the school engages with the mainstream education system as well as the Indigenous cultural reality (Frawley & Fasoli, 2012). These multicultural realities are acknowledged by the parents and teachers with whom I spoke. For example, a Karamojong parent was not happy that his children are taught by non-Karamojong teachers. He was worried about his children taking up a culture different from the Karamojong traditions. P4 said that their children were exposed to western cultures and no longer want to speak the Karamojong language. A more pervasive concern is fear that Karamojong girls will lose their traditional values. An intercultural approach to education will curb such concerns and help parents work together with the teachers to achieve appropriate outcomes for the learners. Intercultural educational leadership allows teachers to understand how multiple knowledge systems can be combined for effective teaching practice (Frawley & Fasoli, 2012).

## **7 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter presents a summary of key findings, recommendations for future study, and the conclusion of this qualitative case study of leadership practices and their impact on enrolment and retention of learners in government primary school in Moroto municipality, a region of extreme poverty and climate mainly inhabited by the Karamojong people, an Indigenous, pastoral group.

Karamojong teachers use a range of leadership strategies to motivate learners to attend school. My research findings show that study centres that created a nurturing and attractive learning environment improved academic performance, which in turn increases the rate of school enrolment and retention. Schools increased the study period, made arrangements for learners to receive room and board, gave holiday revision lessons, and increased classroom assessments to engage learners in continuous revisions. Schools also incorporate cocurricular activities to help learners uncover their creative talents, improve interpersonal and communication skills, and learn how to work as a team. These initiatives attracted learners and foster support from Karamojong parents as avenues for the preservation and transfer of Karamojong cultural values and norms. MDD, particularly folk songs, were held in high esteem. Schools also developed community awareness strategies through campaigns to create community involvement in school education and teach the community the benefit of education. The parents with whom I conversed made no mention of these programs, their effectiveness, or their benefits to the community.

Another critical element in learner retention in Moroto is the provision of meals to learners. Food shortage in Karamoja is endemic. Many households cannot afford more than two meals a day due to the harsh climate in the region, and schools serve corn porridge and posho and beans. Continuous counselling and guidance to learners is another strategy teachers use to support learners coping with the trauma of recent violence and the effect of civil wars. Counselling is crucial, and learners are provided with psychosocial support to mitigate their trauma. The perception of parents about the school leaders' practices added deeper nuance to my thematic analysis. On the one hand, the parents whose children connected well with their teachers described feeling safe sending their children to school. On the other hand, parents who

viewed schools as a foreign strategy to devalue the Karamojong culture are hesitant to send their children to school.

The school leaders interviewed identified several challenges that affected enrolment and retention of learners that cannot be addressed by improved leadership: inadequate buildings that do not have enough classes, desks, or chairs for learners, high poverty rates that translate into pupils without the required school supplies like textbooks, pens, and paper in schools. Many participants and my observations flagged the lack of both proper uniforms and shoes. What is more, teachers are not given meals at school and often must travel long distances because there is no available housing nearby such that there is a dearth of qualified, competent teachers for older primary students and many schools are understaffed.

### **7.1 Recommendations**

School enrolment and retention of learners in Indigenous communities is low across the world. Factors leading to this are comparatively similar. In the Karamoja region, research indicates that parental attitudes to education are influenced by historical, environmental climate, and psychosocial factors. In other words, civil wars, a history of formal education devaluing Indigenous culture, and the dependence of household economies on child labour limit the value of primary formal education.

The Karamojong way of life is nevertheless changing. Reports indicate that households are incorporating farming in addition to pastoralism and are settling in permanent communities (Brown et al., 2017). This new household economy still includes the labour of children, and parents get trapped in the decision of making either education or sustenance the priority. It is important for policy makers to design appropriate strategies for the wellbeing of the whole community. The problems affecting enrolment and retention of learners go beyond the school environment and the sphere of influence of school leaders. Concentrating on education as a single sector will not practically improve education. This study recommends that the government and other stakeholder design patterns of intervention that focus on empowering households to develop capacities for self-reliance. Parents who can afford to pay for school fees and other material requirements are a precondition for further improvement of primary school enrolment and retention in Moroto.

The Karamoja region has the highest proportion of school-age children who have never been to school in Uganda and the problem is most acute for girls. The present study revealed little about this gender inequality because neither school leaders nor parents chose to discuss this issue. That silence is telling. Further research on gender intervention strategies for primary school girls in Karamojong region is required. Consider that there no observed and recorded evidence of academic clubs or student organisations, the International Folk Art Alliance could work in partnership with the MoES to invest in supporting student clubs and organisations that (a) serve food; (b) provide hands-on practice in traditional Karamojong craftsmanship and skills that are culturally appropriate for girls, like basket weaving. The success of both MDD and sports to promote both academic success and parental support of formal education indicates that these kind of co-curriculars, currently missing from Karamojong schools, will have a big impact.





## 8 References

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