Parental Roles in Attending Schools' management Meetings and Pupils' Academic Performance in Uganda

Evangelist Kahunzire, Solomon M. Asiimwe, and Frank P. Kiyingi

ABSTRACT

Pupils' Academic Performance is wanting in many primary schools in Uganda. The public primary schools in Ndorwa County, Kabale District-Uganda is one of the case scenarios in perspective. This research sought views of internal and connected stakeholders regarding parents' attendance of school administration meetings, in support of pupils' educational performances. The study was aimed at developing a parental involvement school partnership model. The researcher used cross sectional survey design supported to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. A sample size of 322 was derived from a population of 2000 using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The research data was analyzed by way of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Qualitative data was analyzed using content and thematic analysis. The results show that students of highly involved family members in schools management meetings and functions significantly outperformed those with family members who were not involved based on scores of the PLE for class 7. Parents of low-come levels, and negative attitude towards their children's education were the main challenge. To improve pupils' academic performance, the research recommends that parents need to consider regular attendance of school meetings and functions. Also, the government of Uganda should create policies that ensure implementation of parental involvement welfares, building of schools, family, and community partnership programs to empower parents and support their Children's learning. The practice of parents' attendance in school meetings and functions in support of pupils' studies needs to be in tandem with deliberations from the ministry of education policies, district education regulations and schools' administration directives. Parents need to check what they aid to pupils with schools' advice.

Keywords: parents' attendance of school meetings, pupils' academic performance, primary schools.

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the key concerns in children's education is on the aspect of parents' attending school management meetings and functions. The quality of a school as far as management and academic performance are duly dependent on the degree of parental involvement in school meetings and functions. When parents enroll children in school, they ensure regular attendance of school meetings and functions. They should also motivate the learners and teachers in various ways. Parents have a role to play in children's education, their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations such as parent-teacher conferences. Although the focus is on parents' attendance in school meetings and functions, this paper explores different modalities through which children can be collaboratively guided in their studies to acquire promising academic performance.

A. Overview of the Exposition

Parents may be involved in their children's education by attending and participating in school functions. The reason for doing so is to find out pupils' performance in class (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). Parents need to participate in school functions, frequently communicate with teachers and school administrators about pupils' academic progress, and consistently attend academic clinics and prize-giving days (Hein & Wimer, 2007). Besides financial support, parents who regularly visit and attend school functions easily monitor pupils' physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development (Bonci, 2008).

Parents' visits enable them to receive relevant information on how to motivate and assist their pupils in solidarity with school administrators and class teachers. When parents receive information about their children's progress, they get motivated to explore more about them. Those who are financially stable can enroll in guidance and counselling classes so that they can deeply understand a child's psychological development. Since attending school

functions is one of the ways through which parents influence pupils' participation in academic activities, not all pupils who might be influenced by such activities. Therefore, there was a need to explore parents' attendance of school functions, and its potential influence on pupils' academic performance (Kigeni, 2013).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE INVESTIGATION

Contemptible academic standards, weak school administration, inefficiency of PTA and management committees' meetings duly affect (case of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018) pupils' academic performance. Poor teachers-parents-pupils' relationship has also contributed to the low academic standards in schools. The researcher subjectively evaluated parents' attendance of school meetings in support of children education and pupils' academic performance in public schools of Ndorwa County, Kabale District-Western Region of Uganda. Ndorwa County has 113 public day mixed primary schools. From the school examinations report files 2018, 15 public day mixed primary schools in Ndorwa County, Kabale District failed to produce candidates with division one and two in the year 2018, 1021 pupils registered for PLE, only 9 % of the students scored division two to three while 45% scored division four, the remaining larger number of (46%) pupils failed by scoring division U. Further, the data revealed that in the year 2017 a total number of 1013 students sat for PLE in the schools. It is only (8%) of the students who scored division two to three while (47%) students obtained division four with the rest (45%) obtaining division U. Therefore, (92%) students failed. UNICEF (2001) states that under poor leadership and administration, children perform poorly in national examinations and leave school ill prepared, lacking necessary skills to thrive in difficult social and economic environment and the capacity to contribute effectively to the society transformation. Such a situation is alarming, bearing in mind that these schools were established to serve social needs. Some research points out that incompetence among school heads is a big problem to the overall administration and management of education. Without proper leadership, which motivates others to accomplish their tasks effectively (Bennaars *et al.*, 1994), high achievement in students' academic performance cannot be realized in public day mixed primary schools, even if an institution would have all the financial resources to excel. In year 2016, a total of 310 candidates sat for Primary Leaving Examination, 24% scored division two to three while 61% scored division four and 15% scored division U (Tugume, 2019

A. Attending School Meetings and Functions

Social Learning Theory was found relevant to this study on the basis that parents influence the behavior of their children by being role models. Positive role modelling is experienced when parents establish an environment that enhances learning. Parents in addition, reinforce pupils' participation in academic activities by attending school functions. When pupils observe that their parents are interested in what goes on in school, they avoid getting involved in wrongdoing.

Learning is achieved through interaction between different stakeholders. Parents play significant roles because their encouragement touches on the cultural and socio-economic perspective. Interaction between the different stakeholders contributes to the learners' integration social as well as cognitive processes. Through the principles of Social Learning Theory, parents, teachers, and school administrators can identify, and explain the source of certain behavior in pupils and guide them rightly. Affirmatively, effective guidance and counselling departments in all institutions of learning is enhanced. Therefore, a healthy interaction between the relevant stakeholders may promote trust and enhance the attitude of the mind-set. For instance, parents who are engaged in studies influence their children's commitment to academics. When pupils realize their parents' interest in their learning, and corresponding obligations such as paying school levies, attending school functions, frequently supervise assignments and assist in assignments, they become more committed to academic activities.

Thomson (2001) outlined three benefits of parent's attendance to school functions. Thomson observes that students whose parents attend school functions have improved school behavior and are academically motivated. Such schools have a "healthier" school climate because parents are constantly informed on challenges facing the school and preferably courses of action. In his study, Thomson further urged that when parents attend annual general meetings, prize giving days or academic clinics, they widen their social network because they interact with parents from other geographical settings. Social interactions enable them to share positive practices that would assist in improving pupils' participation in academic activities. Since parents from the primary schools in Ndorwa County are drawn from different ethnic communities and come from diverse social economic backgrounds and cultural realities, their attendance to school meetings and other school functions may perhaps be integrative.

Although parents could by circumstance miss out on school functions by certain situations, Whit (2011) does not consider such parents as bad as long as they attempt to inquire the issues discussed and address them as required. This means that parents need to understand the importance of school functions in order to respond to the demands of class teachers and school administration. When parents fail to attend any school function(s), they need to make follow up of knowing what issues were discussed and respond effectively. Latif (2002) study on collaborative family-school relationship for children learning pointed out that a strong relationship between school and families is a good encounter between parents and teachers. The purpose of such meetings is to maximize pupils' output in homework. The study further suggested strategies for helping teachers to develop school-family partnership. Ferlazzo (2012) proposed that parents should be assigned duties at school to enable them to be in constant with teachers and school administrator.

Parents need to be encouraged to have frequent meetings with teachers during school days in order to enhance their relationship. However, school administrators should be sensitive to time management and the work pressure facing the parent in their daily engagements. Parent-teachers'

meetings may be efficacious if they are scheduled for morning hours. Early notification for set meetings and activities, provide information for parents who do not attend meetings to keep them informed. In addition, schools should address the issue of parent resource constraints by providing parents with transportation service holding school event near family homes. Accordingly, Latif recommendations are not applicable in the context of rural schools in Ndorwa County. The distance from school, communication network and even the issue of insecurity may make it difficult for parents to cooperatively attend frequent school meetings or assignments. Therefore, alternative measures could be sought to ensure that parents from the schools in Ndorwa County as a case in point could be encouraged to attend schools' functions (Wayne & Santead, 2012).

Parents' involvement in attending school functions plays a great role in boosting pupils' morale. A study conducted by Muiru *et al.* (2012), revealed that the cause of poor performance in KCPE is lack of support from parents. According to Mwiru *et al.* (2014), parent's involvement in school functions has powerful effects on pupil's academic lives. The study suggested that Head teachers are required to involve parents in the management of schools as stipulated in the Kamunge report of 1988. Parents are equally expected to attend and actively participate in the proceedings of various meetings where school plans are developed, and policies are formulated. The study revealed that 67.6% of parents attend school annual meetings while 11.9 % attend academic meetings. This means that most of the parents in the area are not keen on academic performance.

A similar study conducted by Kariuki (2014) showed that pupils' progress in academic activities depends on parents' ability to take up school invitations. Accordingly, when parents develop negative attitude towards education due to lack of confidence acquired during their schooling history, they distance themselves from attending school functions. Such parents rarely visit the school to check on their children's performance. In contrast, parents who visit schools participate actively in schools' activities as they feel their obligation in supporting the school and monitoring their children's academic progress. Unfortunately, child and school-based factors may block-off parents from attending school affairs. Some pupils may fail to communicate to their parents about the meetings and some Head teachers may also feel threatened when parents' frequent schools. Purportedly, because parents might discover their unprincipled dealings (CEA, 2014).

The family-school partnership approach proposed by Latif is characterized by a belief in shared responsibility for education and socializing children and youths. Accordingly, the approach advocates collaborative problem-solving and shared decision making in order to provide learners with consistent, congruent messages about their homework and behavior. Although families and educators have different roles in enhancing communication, Wayne (2012) observes that to encourage school parents' collaboration, school administrators should encourage parents to attend school programs. This therefore opens up another area of concern regarding communication patterns in parents- teachers' collaboration.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross-sectional survey design. A research sample of 322 was derived using simple random and purposive sampling techniques, from the accessible population of 2000 as Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) study stipulates. The respondents include pupils, teachers, parents /guardians, District Education Officer, and Area Inspector of schools of selected primary of Ndorwa County, Kabale District-Uganda. A sample size of 322 was derived from a population of 2000 using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The research data was analyzed by way of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Qualitative data was analyzed using content and thematic analysis.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A. Parental Roles in Attending School Management Meetings and Pupils' Academic Performance

Most of the issues highlighted about parents' meetings showed that in the sampled schools, parental cooperation directly influences pupils' academic progress. Parents ought to attend these functions in order to assist their children in academic activities. However, 101/206(49.0%) of the parents did not attend these meetings. This could be attributed to unpretentious relationship between parents and school administrators as of the parents said:

> *"The head teacher never listens to parents' advice and is not welcoming. He always complains that parents are uncooperative. This has scared some of the parents from attending his meetings."*

Table I shows the average number of parents who attend school meetings in 30 schools of the sampled public day primary schools in Ndorwa County.

The results in Table I show that most of the sampled schools experienced a high number of parents attending meetings. For example, in school A, the total number of class 5 parents is 75 out of which 64 attended the meeting in 2018. This translates to 85.3%. In 2018, 57/69(83%) of parents attended the meeting in school A. Class 7 parents who attended meeting in 2018 were 57/60 (95%). Parents' attendance at meetings could be attributed to the fact that most of them understand the importance of education. They might have also embraced the Government policy on Free Compulsory Education.

The results in Table I, however, in some schools, parents' attendance of school meetings is very unpromising. The total number of class 5 parents in school B in 2018 was 96 but only 34(35.4%) attended school meetings. In school C, out of 105 parents, only 31/105(29.5%) and in school I, out of the 372 parents in 2018, only 125/372(33.6%) of them attended school meetings. According to the teachers interviewed, the low attendance of parents to school meetings is because some parents are committed to their roles in education of their children. One of the teachers during the interview pointed that "parents from this school are not keen on attending school functions, and this has

resulted to discouraging academic performance."

TABLE I: AVERAGE NUMBER OF PARENTS ATTENDING MEETINGS AND FUNCTIONS FOR 1 YEAR

Yr	School	Class 5			Class 6			Class 7		
		Parents	Present	%	Parents	Present	%	Parents	Present	%
2018	A	75	64	85.3	69	57	82.6	60	57	95
	B	96	34	35.4	84	44	52.4	60	53	88.3
	C	105	31	29.5	111	51	45.9	132	57	43.2
	D	48	46	95.8	66	63	95.5	78	75	96.2
	E	36	27	75	45	31	68.9	33	29	87.9
	F	66	54	81.8	33	27	81.8	48	44	91.7
	G	96	67	69.8	93	71	96.3	72	62	86.1
	H	61	45	73.8	69	52	82.6	48	37	77.1
	I	372	125	33.6	264	110	41.7	210	100	47.6
	J	69	63	91.3	81	73	90.1	42	40	95.2
	K	84	41	48.8	99	51	51.5	90	40	44.4
	L	108	31	28.7	108	42	38.9	138	91	65.9
	M	80	73	91.3	99	91	91.9	72	33	45.8
	N	36	23	63.9	39	25	64.1	48	41	85.4
	O	42	37	88.1	48	45	93.8	78	47	60.3
	P	84	65	77.4	147	116	78.9	69	50	72.5
	Q	98	90	91.8	87	79	90.8	63	53	84.1
	R	348	132	37.9	230	100	43.5	228	54	23.7
	S	69	60	86.9	80	49	61.2	210	73	34.7
	T	58	51	87.9	220	105	47.7	113	64	56.6
	U	214	180	84.1	50	35	70	270	267	98.8
	V	69	58	84.0	72	62	86.1	147	126	85.7
	W	47	39	82.9	101	76	75.2	86	60	69.7
	X	320	257	80.3	63	52	82.5	49	43	87.7
	Y	127	117	92.1	201	177	88.0	90	74	82.2
	Z	91	78	85.7	49	30	61.2	109	88	80.7
	I	310	256	82.5	92	80	86.9	39	20	51.2
	II	127	91	71.6	74	66	89.1	136	101	74.2
	III	109	100	91.7	59	47	79.6	192	176	91.6
	IV	296	250	84.4	81	70	86.4	78	50	64.1

Source: Table I shows numerical values as derived from field research study on the school report files (2018).

The teacher continued that "some of the parents complain that school administrators do not take their ideas and opinions seriously while others refuse to attend because they owe the school some money." At the same time, some parents do not appreciate the importance of education, against Hein and Wimer (2007) view that academic achievement could be realized when parents, teachers and School administrators engage in frequent communication.

The results further indicate that class 7 parents from most of the sampled schools relatively attended school meetings, except in school C and I where more than half of the parents' avoided meetings. According to the interviewed teachers, some parents avoid meetings because they owe the school some money, others have negative attitude towards the school, others are ignorant while others are pre-occupied with other responsibilities which they view to be more important than attending school meetings. During the interaction with the respondents in schools' C and I, the study found out that few parents and especially female parents attend the Parents Teachers Association meetings but not all implement the decisions as they open up what has been resolved to their husbands who many at times turn them down.

On the issue of attending school meetings and functions, one of the parents during focus group discussion said:

"Parents have to attend in order to understand what is happening in school. Failure to attend such meetings accrues penalties, she added. Our parents, though aware that by attending school functions they are in position to monitor academic progress of their children as they meet with teachers, some of them ignore."
(Field Research Data, 2020)

This is in line with Hein and Wimer (2007, who argued that when parents attend school functions, they strengthen communication between teachers and pupils thus enhancing pupils' morale towards academic activities. When further probed on why some parents fail to attend school functions, one of the parents boldly said:

"The parents who skip school functions do not love their children and they contribute to demoralizing them. It is not a wonder to find that such parents do not know the classes of their children."

One of the class teachers during the interview said:

"You can hardly see some parents attending school functions, and if they attend, they remain silent throughout the whole session. The same parents are in the forefront preaching that the schools are mismanaged."
(Field Research Data, 2020)

When one of the parents was asked why parents do not attend school meetings, he said, "The Head teacher never listens to parents' advice and is not welcoming. He always complains that parents are uncooperative and intruders. This has scared some of the parents from attending his meetings."

This is supported by Sing (2004) who revealed that at times, school environment may discourage parents in the sense that school administrators intimidate them, and their ideas may be ignored.

The class teachers who participated in the interview observed that, although parents attend school functions, some of them are not zealous. It is characterized by apologies, and absenteeism. When asked why parents fail to attend school functions, one of the pupils pointed "my mother has a lot of responsibilities, so she cannot afford to attend school meetings." Such a comment is a clear indication that some parents in the area of study are not committed to attending school functions, which is a drawback to school development as well as pupils' academic achievements. Other reasons given by both teachers and pupils are that some of the pupils live with their aged and sometimes-sickly grandparents who may not manage to attend the functions. Again, some parents with academically weak pupils skip functions like prize giving to avoid embarrassment. Such parents fail to understand that their presence at school functions boosts the pupils' morale. Hein and Wimer (2007) argued that when parents attend school functions, they strengthen communication between teachers and pupils and enhance pupils' morale towards academic activities.

One of the few parents who do not attend school functions said:

> *"When any parent owes the school some money, some of us avoid functions such as parents' meetings and academic clinics. The reason for doing so is to avoid being exposed to the school management committee as defaulters. Secondly, both the Head teachers and school committees, who sometimes rebuke us, do not respect our views as parents. Why attend such a gathering, better stay at home."*

> (2020 March 25th)

Many parents from the sampled schools fail to attend school function for no apparent reason. On whether the issues discussed during parents' meetings are of any benefit to the child's education or not, one of the parents said, "In most of the meetings, issues concerning school developments, absenteeism (common on market days) are discussed. Parents mostly discuss school levies (the greatest challenge to parents).

This study aimed at evaluating parents' involvement in children's education towards success of pupils in the national examinations (PLE). It sought to provide quality parental support and coherent structures, reduce tension, and help pupils complete academic activities through PISPM. The different theories which guided this research are promisingly applied within the administration of schools in Ndorwa County- Kabale District-Uganda. The challenges cited by this research on the performance of pupils in primary schools are numerous. Specific issues concern proactive administration of the pupils' learning. Some of the concerns which this research points out included power balance in leadership, and positive conflict management. It is imperative that parental involvement in fostering pupils' academic performance is proactively executed. Also, the governing structures, negotiated management, leadership fraternity and aspect of positive conflict management within the schools' administration. The researcher suggests the model figure below (Fig. 1) as a framework for parents' involvement in child education for prospective pupils' academic performance.
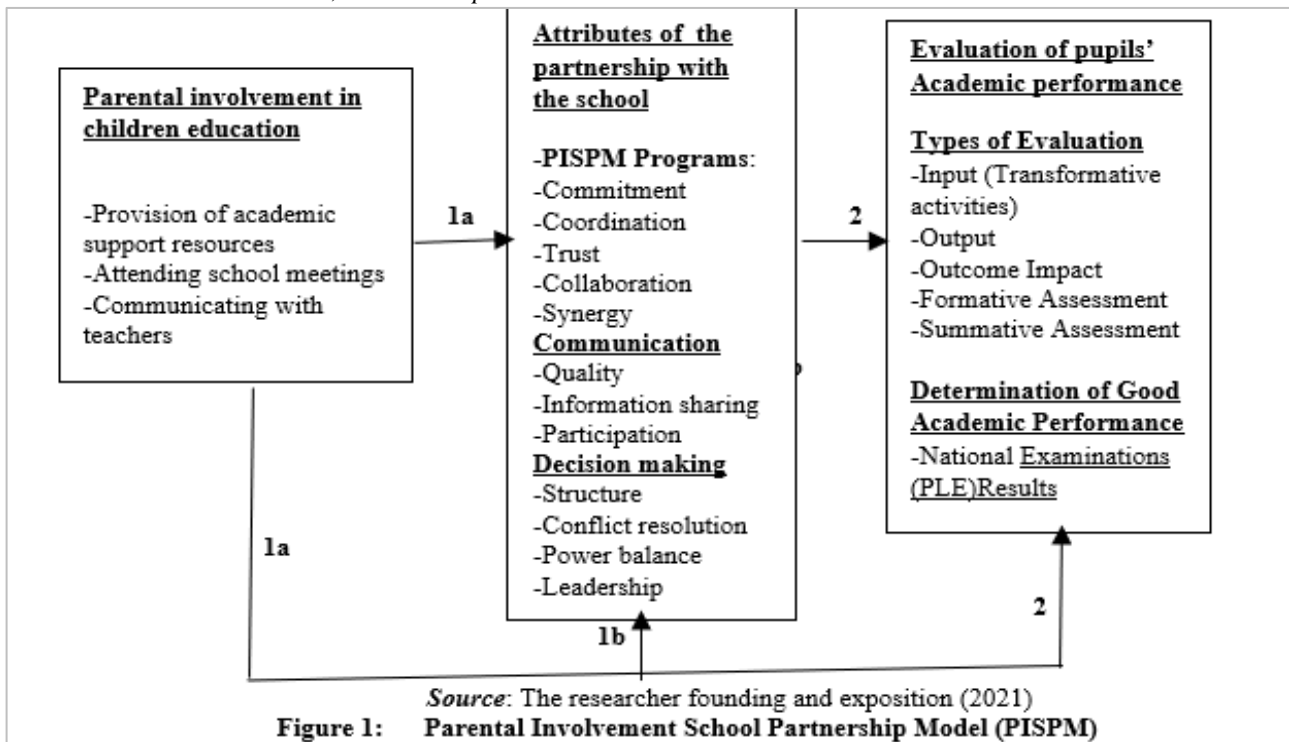

Figure 1: Parental Involvement School Partnership Model (PISPM)

Source: The researcher founding and exposition (2021)

1(a) shows that Parental involvement in children education and pupils' academic performance relate with other factors and Vice-versa.
1(b) shows that Parental involvement in children's education and pupils' academic performance is a link between policy environment and other factors of quality education.
2. School and home environments are interconnected to learners' academic performance.

V. TESTABILITY AND WORKABILITY

The model has been adopted by the parents of the schools mentioned here below:

TABLE II: ADOPTION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

School	Locality	Frequency	Percentage
1.Kamwenge public day mixed primary	Kamwenge,District,Western Uganda	30	25.4
2.St. Kizito day primary school	Kampala District- Central Uganda	30	25.4
3.Mpumudde public day mixed primary	Jinja District	29	24.6
3.Christ the King Demonstration public day mixed primary	Gulu District-Northern Uganda.	29	24.6
	Total	118	100

Source: Research author (2021).

A. Assumption of Parent Involvement School Partnership Model (PISPM)

Through this model, the parents' role for children's learning is captured and emphasized so that the children's learning begins from home. The child becomes the learner and parent becomes the first/principal teacher, the uncles, aunties and neighbors become co-teachers at home. Teachers at school are co-teachers of home learning. Home activities become the first teaching and learning aids in instilling values, skills, competence and knowledge. The siblings are schoolmates, home rules are daily timetable, the first born or last born becomes the head prefect depending on the family choice.

The model is intended to be used to generate ideas for further research on parental involvement in children's education. Some aspects of the model have been well researched, such as the demographic factors which influence parental involvement. Other factors identified in the model on which further research would be useful are parents' beliefs about parental involvement and parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement. The model has also been developed so that it can be used in the training of teachers, educational psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and other professionals who work in the education system. Studying the model will enable these professionals to gain greater insight into the factors which facilitate the development of effective parental involvement. This will enable such professionals to develop more effective practices with regard to parental involvement in education so that they can optimize the impact of this important aspect of the educational process.

B. Application of the Parent Involvement School Partnership Model (PISPM)

In application of the PISPM, a quality circle approach needs to be collaboratively considered. Service delivery should be symmetrical in-service delivery. It should deliver quality (meeting learners' expectations and educational standards). The performance needs to be a symmetrical because, performance of pupils and students in their respective schools need to be administered in accordance with the ministry of educational policy directives, while the aim of every pupil or student should be to excellent performance in their learning exams as well as social character. Quality circle management of teaching and learning in schools can employee the following recommendations procedures.

Parents and guardians need to evaluate their performance either as individuals or specific groups of parents. For example, parents to pupils in class 7 should decide to meet and discuss their pupils' performance and constructively check the extent to which parents cooperate with the schools' guidelines. Particular attention should be paid to how parents support and devise measures to improve their constructive contributions to schools and pupils with their studies.

Teachers, and schools' management need to pay attention to the ministry of education policy directives, schools' curriculum, and general needs of the students. Teachers of different subjects should stage their individual discipline meetings. The points to check about include 'what is required of them as teachers of a particular subject.' (e.g., mathematics, science, social studies, and English...); How is the performance at a given time; what needs to be done to improve teachings approach, for pupils and students to attain higher grades in their studies.

Evaluation criteria of PISPM is about required input (teaching, and parent with teachers' collaboration) to achieve transformative results. The emblem of PISPM performance applicability of inputs which different teachers offer, and what parents plus guardians can collaboratively deliver. Collaboratively, service delivery in accordance with call(s) by Ministry of education and school administrators especially from PTA consultations. Transformative is about what needs to be felt in the lives of teachers, schools' administrators, pupils, parents or guardians with focus on pupils or students' educational performance.

VI. CONCLUSION

Learning involves acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that bring about permanent change in one's life. The primary pupils' learning, and development should not be of one person's responsibility, but the entire community should be involved in the affairs of the school for example the parents, local leaders, old students, security, business companies to mention but a few. When the entire community is brought on board, it leads to teamwork, hence a systematic approach of problem solving. The researcher established that execution of deliberations from the PTA meetings. It is hardly executed by many parents or teachers hardly implement discussions from the meetings. There is a need to sensitize parents on their roles in promoting child education and encourage the county as well as national governments to support parents by establishing structures and policies that boost the standards of education in the area.

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