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Parents' Contributions towards Education Process and Variations in School Performance Indices (SPI) in Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) Examinations in Central and Northern Uganda

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Abstract: The study examined the level of parents' contributions to their children's education process and its influence on SPI in UCE examinations in Central and Northern Uganda. The objective was to investigate the influence of the levels of the parents' contributions towards education process of their children on the SPI in UCE in schools in Central and Northern Uganda. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. 72 school leaders, 80 teachers, 140 students, 12 parents and 10 Key Informants (KI) participated. Data was collected using interviews, questionnaires and Informal Conversational Interview and analysed to obtain SPA, SPI and RSPC, frequency counts, percentages and using t-test. The result showed that the Parents of students in schools in Central Uganda contributed more than the parents from Northern Uganda. This has resulted in schools in Central Uganda achieving higher School Performance Indices ($69\% \leq 118\%$) than schools in Northern Uganda ($71\% \leq 163\%$). School leaders, especially, of schools in Northern Uganda therefore need to encourage parents to contribute more in their children's school.

Keywords: School performance index; School Performance average (Aggregates); Performance; Parents' contributions; Variations; Education process.

1. Introduction

Uganda has always shown efforts in building a strong educational sector through accepting the International Community decision to make sure that by the year 2015, it attained universal access to quality basic education. Uganda formulated the policies of Universal Primary Education (UPE), 1997; Universal Secondary Education (USE) 2007; liberalization of establishment of educational institutions; provision of educational loans in higher institutions and affirmative action for girls and persons with disabilities to help to increase access to quality education for all.

But for more than three decades the candidates from Central Region of Uganda have been performing better than their counterparts from Northern Uganda in public examinations including Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examinations (Vision Education Consults, 2011). In Districts from Central Uganda, 13% to 18% of the candidates who sat UCE examinations during the year passed in Division one while in Districts from Northern Uganda, 0% to slightly over 6% of the candidates who sat the examinations during the same year passed in Division one (UNEB, 2011). Similarly, in (2009) UCE examinations, all the Candidates of some schools in Central Region passed in grade one. The best candidates in Central Uganda all scored Candidates' Performance Averages (CPA) or aggregate eight (8) in their eight (8) best subjects but the best candidates' scores in Northern Uganda Districts were from aggregate 13 to 27 in their best 8 subjects. Lastly, five schools out of top ten best performing schools who had School Performance Averages (SPAs) ranging from 1.02 to 1.51 implying that majority of the candidates were getting Distinction 1 or 2, while the schools from Northern Uganda had SPAs ranging from 1.80 to 3.30 implying that majority of the candidates were obtaining Credits 3 and below (Uganda Government, 1992).

In this paper, performances in UCE examinations were measured and compared using School Performance Indices (SPI) (School Means expressed as percentage) Mwai and Hassan (2009) that are "annual measure" of test score performance of schools (API, 2010). Performance Index models developed follow same general principle of measuring student performance based on the percent of students scoring in each achievement level. More points are awarded for students scoring at the highest levels and earn more points for higher grades. These points are averaged for the school and the result is the School Performance Index (SPI). School Performance Index models can mitigate one of the frequently cited cautions about using Status models in accountability systems that evaluating schools only on the percent of students might motivate schools to concentrate their efforts on the so-called "good students"—

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those students who score just above or just below the average level—to the possible neglect of students on the lowest and the highest ends of the performance scale. By instituting a Performance Index Model schools have more incentive to concentrate on more students below average not just those on the cusp. Changes in the index from year to year (Rate of School Performance Change (RSPC) are a better indicator of how well schools are educating students who began at the lowest achievement levels—not just those on the proficient bubble—than the current status models.

The School Performance Index (SPI) can be obtained by using the formular:

$$\text{SPI} = \frac{\text{SPA for current Year}}{\text{SPA of Base Year}} \times 100$$

Schools from Central Uganda have been getting better SPI (69% - 118%) than schools from Northern Uganda (71% - 163%). This implies that students from Central Uganda have been performing better than the students from Northern Uganda in UCE examinations during the last ten years (2001 – 2011).

2. Statement of the Problem

The variations in performances between schools from Central and Northern Uganda in public examinations including UCE examinations reflect a problem in Uganda’s education system. The variations are reflected in the number of candidates passing in grade one; Candidates’ Performance Averages (CPA) or Aggregates obtained in best eight subjects; and School Performance Averages (SPA). A fundamental question for educational planners and policy makers has been how to provide quality education for all, including equal performances in public examinations such as UCE examinations. Stakeholders- government, district leaders, teachers, parents and students have been trying to find the causes of these variations in performances. This study therefore was concerned with investigating this most serious contemporary issue facing Ugandan Education system, i.e. “if the level of parents’ contributions towards the education process of their children leads to variations in the candidates’ performances in UCE examinations leading to variations in School Performance Indices (SPI) between the schools in Central and Northern Uganda.

3. Rationale

All the researches were not done in Uganda neither were they based on results of a summative evaluation tools like the UCE examinations. The economic, socio-cultural and other environmental factors that differ with that of Uganda can easily influence the level of parents’ contributions and students’ performances differently. The research findings were also based on quantitative analyses only yet qualitative investigations and analyses could have brought out different results.

4. The Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of parents’ contributions to their children’s education process and its influences on SPI in the UCE examinations in schools in Central and Northern regions of Uganda.

5. Specific Objectives

The objectives of the study were to: investigate the school strategies to encourage the parents to make contributions to their children’s education; how the parents contribute towards the education process of their children; examine the influence of parental contributions on the students’ performances in UCE examinations and there by on the SPI of schools in Central and Northern Uganda.

6. Hypothesis

This study was guided by the hypothesis “The level of parental contributions towards students’ education process by parents of students studying in Central Uganda is not better than contributions by parents of students studying in Northern Uganda”.

7. Scope

The research was carried out in the Districts of, Arua, Koboko, Gulu, Kitgum and Zombo in Northern Region and Kampala, Mukono, and Wakiso in Central Region because there were glaring differences in the performances in UCE examinations between the districts. Comparison in contributions by parents and their influences on SPI was done from the year 2001 to 2011. The study examined and analysed the extent to which the parents’ contributions lead to variations in SPI in UCE examinations. The population included: students, teachers, head teachers (HTs), deputy head teachers (DHTs), Directors of Studies (DOSs), Career Guidance Teachers (CGTs), parents and Key Informers (KI).

8. Theoretical Framework

The Resource Based View (Penrose, 1959), cited by Mugimu (2004) expanded by organisational theorists and adopted by researchers is relevant for this research. Organisations are truly heterogeneous in the sense that they have different kinds of resources which they use to sustain their superior performances (Barney, 1991a). Resources and capabilities can be heterogeneously distributed across competing firms..., and they can help explain why some firms consistently outperform other firms (Barney, 2001b).

Thus, it is assumed that the Secondary Schools in Uganda are heterogeneous in terms of level of parents' contributions in terms of resources, time and efforts contributed by parents towards the education of their children leading to inequities in the education process placing students from Region where there is poor level of parents' contribution to disadvantage in learning that may affect students' performance and SPI in examinations.

9. Literature Review

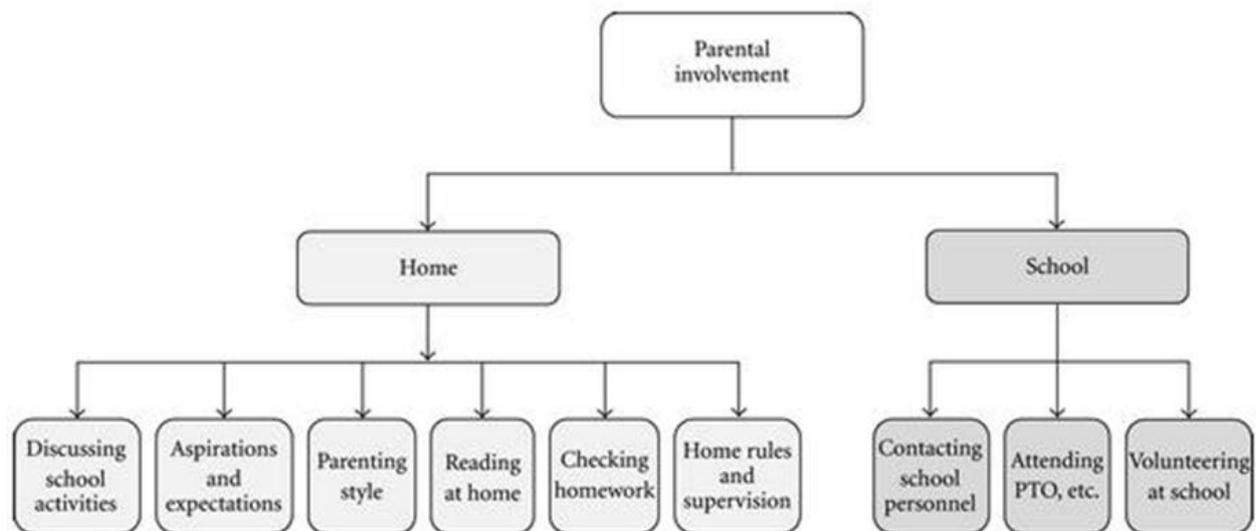
9.1. The Concept of Parental Contribution towards the Education Process of Their Children

The research studies as cited by Bushra and Rehana (2010) revealed that various factors are responsible for scholastic failure of students, including the support given by the parents... (Fan and Chen, 2001; Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2002; Khan and Malik, 1999). According to Bushra and Rehana (2010), generally, schools are considered as places which provide appropriate learning environment for a child, but importance of parents cannot be ignored. The pivotal role of parents still continues as it has been recognized by the teachers and parents themselves that they are essential for complete development of the personality and career of their children. Gonzalez-Pienda et al. (2002) indicated that "without the children's parental support, it is hard for teachers to devise academic experiences to help students learn meaningful content" (p.281).

In this paper therefore, parents' contributions towards the educational process of their children were measured using: provision of extra resources such as text books, extra money paid for seminars, academic trips and pocket money; time provided to look at children's work, helping children in doing homework, attending PTA, BOG, House, Class and other meetings and Visitations during which their children's academic progress is discussed with teachers and administration. Provision of conducive environment for their children's revision during holidays, hiring extra teachers to help the children in their weak subjects, giving the children the necessary time and providing parental guidance and counseling. All these point towards the parental involvement in the education process of their children. Nancy and Lorraine (2004) as cited by Nyamusana (2010) stated the ways through which the parents can get involved including volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other school personnel, assisting in academic activities at home, attending school events, providing school fees and scholastic materials, disciplining their children and providing them with moral support.

Therefore, parental contribution to their children's education can be through their involvement in a number of activities related to the education process of the children both at home and at school as illustrated by Valerie et al. (2011), as illustrated in the Figure 1 below.

Figure-1. Prominent aspects of parental involvement enacted at home and at school



9.2. School Involvement of Parents

Parental engagement is a powerful lever for raising achievement in schools. Where parents and teachers work together to improve learning, the gains in achievement are significant. They develop a two way relationship with parents based on mutual trust, respect and a commitment to improving learning outcomes. Where schools have made concerted efforts to engage parents, evidence shows that the effect on pupil's behaviour is positive. But the parents need to be encouraged to get involved in volunteering at school, communicating with teachers, providing the necessary resources to complement school efforts, complement the efforts of their children and provide the moral support to their children. Researches by Bauch (1993); Epstein and Dauber (1991); Epstein (1986); (Dauber and Epstein, 1993); Epstein (1994); Eccles and Harold (1993) as cited by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) consistently produced evidence that patterns of teacher attitudes and invitations were important to many parents' decisions about participation in children's schooling. Eccles and Harold (1994); Epstein (1994); Leitch and Tagari (1988); Moles (1993) said that the general invitations and demands presented by schools seem potentially very influential in parents' decisions about involvement in their children's education. Epstein (1986); Becker and Epstein (1982) as cited by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) further found out that parents with high- involvement teachers were more positive about school and more aware of teachers' interests in their involvement than were parents with low- involvement teachers and those parents with high- involvement teachers worked to involve all parents regardless of socio-economic level. Thus, Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that parents were most involved when teachers actively encouraged involvement. No wonder Dauber and Epstein (1993) found that parents who recorded stronger beliefs in the school's efforts to involve them also believed strongly in the "goodness" of the school. Similarly, Eccles and Harold (1994) reported that parents who hold more positive views of the schools' concern, accountability and desire for parents' involvement were more involved in the school. On the other hand, Anson *et al.* (1991); Comer (1991); Cochran and Dean (1991); Powell (1993) found out that school organizations oriented towards understanding students' families often experience success in increasing parents' involvement. The schools include parents in a variety of meaningful roles and, in so doing, increase communication and trust among parents, students and school staff and come to consensus on appropriate role expectations and behaviours, clarity and agreement on member roles that is likely to increase all members' successful and satisfying performances of their own roles.

However, there are possible barriers to involvement including teacher and staff attitudes toward involvement, family/cultural beliefs, fathers' educational level, irregular work schedules, and lack of knowledge on the part of fathers of how to become involved (Fagan and Iglesias, 1999; Levine James *et al.*, 1998; McBride Brent and Rane Thomas, 1997). It is therefore important to find out how much the school leaders in Central and Northern Uganda are doing to motivate parents to contribute to help their children to excel in UCE examinations; how the parents from Central and Northern Uganda perform in the area of their engagement in the education process of their children.

9.3. Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement

Researchers have evidence for positive effects of parental involvement on children's learning (Eccles and Harold, 1993). Further, Henderson and Berla (1994) found that the most accurate predictor of a students' achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that students' family is able to become involved in their children's education at school and in the community (p. 160). According to Fan and Chen (2001) the idea that parental involvement has positive influence on students' academic achievement is so intuitively appealing that society in general and educators in particular, have considered parental involvement as an important ingredient for remedy of many problems in education. Maria *et al.* (2015) found small to moderate and practically meaningful relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. According to Anne *et al.* (2012), a new study shows that parental involvement matters more for performance than schools, but does not mean only going to PTA meetings. Parental involvement according to Anne *et al.* (2012); Maria *et al.* (2015) includes: general supervision of children's learning activities; meeting with teachers; developing and maintaining communication with the children about school activities and helping the children develop reading habits; checking homework; attending school meetings and events; discussing school activities at home. Parental involvements in the said activities have more powerful influence on students' academic performance than anything about the school the students attend. Effort put forth by parents for meeting with teachers has bigger impact on their children's educational achievement than the effort expended by their teachers or the students themselves. Epstein (2001); Keyes (2002); Sheldon (2002); Dearing *et al.* (2006); Driessen *et al.* (2005); Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (2005); Nettle (2008); Waanders *et al.* (2007); Alma and Janet (2007) Fagan and Iglesias (1999) discovered that when traditional parental involvement activities were adapted it increased, children's learning, students reported increased effort, concentration, attention, interest in and responsibility for learning and higher perceived competence and scores. Alma and Janet (2007) found out that Parents play a vital role in the development and education of their children and in the success of schools. Fagan and Iglesias (1999) discovered that when traditional parental involvement activities were adapted for fathers of preschool-age children in Head Start, overall involvement increased, and their children's mathematics readiness scores improved. According to Campbell (1992) as cited by Kaahwa (2012), parents played a crucial role in their daughters' Mathematics and Science education. He said that, when things were not going well at school, learners needed to be assured of the sanctuary at home.

Gonzalez-DeHass *et al.* (2005) found out that when parents were involved in students' learning, students reported increased effort, concentration, attention, interest in and responsibility for learning and higher perceived

competence. Parental encouragement and promise was linked to students' intrinsic motivation while over-controlling monitoring of homework and use of extrinsic rewards were linked to extrinsic motivation. In addition, the students were found to have adopted a mastery goal orientation to learning, which meant that they were more likely to seek challenging tasks, persist with academic challenges and experience satisfaction in their school work. Gonzalez-DeHass *et al.* (2005) found out that school-based parental participation boosted students' perceived control and competence, offered a sense of security and connectedness, and helped students to internalize educational values. Grolnick and Slowiacz as quoted by Nancy and Lorraine (2004) and later by Nyamusana (2010) found that parental involvement in the management of students' discipline leads to good academic performance. Nancy and Lorraine (2004) as cited by Nyamusana (2010) said that the activities of parental involvement were associated with reciprocal benefits for schools, parents and students, and ultimately, good academic performances.

Therefore there is all research evidence that parental contributions to their children's education through their involvements in various activities both at home and at school related to their children's education has relation with the children's academic achievement. This will later influence their performances in public examinations and SPI. For instance, Epstein (2001); Keyes (2002); Sheldon (2002); Dearing *et al.* (2006); Driessen *et al.* (2005); Hoover-Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (2005); Nettle (2008); Waanders *et al.* (2007); Alma and Janet (2007) Fagan and Iglesias (1999) discovered that there was a significant relationship between overall parental involvement and students' academic achievement. Further researches suggest that parental participation in children's learning is positively related to students' intellectual, ... development. Jeynes (2005) found a significant relationship between overall parental involvement and students' academic achievement. Parental expectation for children's educational achievement was the strongest factor relationship with students' academic achievement Fan and Chen (2001). Parental expectation and support for their children's learning creates the conditions for improved student outcomes. Jones and White (2000) found small, yet statistically significant, relationship between parents' involvement in learning activities at home and their children's language achievement scores. Barnard (2004) found out that parental involvement in school was significantly associated with increased on-time high-school completion and highest grade completed.

However, there are also studies that indicate limited or no association at all between parental participation and children's learning outcomes. Nyamusana (2010) found no relationship between parental involvement in the management of students' discipline and students' academic performances. The meta-analysis of 41 parental involvement programme evaluations by Mattingly (2002) found little empirical support for the widespread claim that parental involvement programme are an effective means of improving students' achievement.... But on the other hand, they did not conclude that such programmes were ineffective but rather stated that evaluation of such programmes lacked rigour and that the evidence of these programme's success did not justify the claims made about parental involvement. It is however observed that the authors' focus was on programme evaluations; their findings therefore did not exclude any possibility of positive impacts of parental participation on students' learning and achievement. Even when Domina (2005) found that the impact of parental participation activities on children's academic achievement was negative and insignificant, she also found that parents' participation was positively related to children's behaviour and she referred to the indirect impact of parental participation by acknowledging that improvements in behaviour translated into academic advantage in the long run. Muola (2010) found out that significant ($p < 0.05$) positive relationship existed between six of the home environmental factors, fathers' occupation ($r = 0.22$), mothers' occupation ($r = 0.26$), fathers' education ($r = 0.15$), mothers' education ($r = 0.14$), family size ($r = 0.26$), learning facilities at home ($r = 0.23$) and academic achievement motivation. Although these correlations were low, they showed that pupils' motivation to do well in academic work was to some extent dependent on the nature of their home environment.

Therefore, could the parental contributions through their involvement in their children's education process have played a great role in determining students' performances in UCE examinations and variations in SPI between schools in Central and Northern Uganda?

10. Methods

The study used both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture information. The data about the level of parents' contribution were descriptive and involved frequency counts that were analysed statistically. The study population was made up of stakeholders of all "traditional" secondary schools that were established by the Missionaries before Independence and by Government in the early 1960s in Central Region (18 secondary schools) and Northern Region of Uganda (15 secondary schools) that have both "O" and "A" levels. 140 students; 120 teachers; 8 head teachers; 8 Deputy Head teachers Academic, 8 DOSs, 8 CGTs; 12 parents; and 10 (KIs) participated. In order to control for extraneous variables, comparison groups were matched, i.e. the schools selected from Central Uganda and those from Northern Uganda were all well-established schools.

A self-constructed structured open-ended interview guide was used to collect data from Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers Academic, Directors of Studies and Career Guidance Teachers and Parents who were asked to report their views, opinions, perceptions and attitudes on contributions by parents to help the students excel in UCE examinations. Self-constructed close-ended Questionnaire was designed to sought information from students and teachers using a 5-likert Very Regularly (VR); Regularly (R); Seldom (S); Not At All (NAT); or Not Sure (NS; or Very Often (VO); Often (O); Seldom (S); Not At All (NAT); Not Sure (NS) on students' and teachers' opinions on contributions by parents to help children achieve high performances in the examinations.

The researcher used Informal Conversational Interview to increase salience and relevance of questions and to match the interview to individuals and circumstances.

Assessment Records, Minutes of Board of Governors (BOG) and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, Minutes of House, Class, Academic Meetings, were utilized. The scores of students in UCE examinations (2001 to 2011) were obtained and used to calculate the SPI.

The Data was analysed in three (3) phases. First, the results of the UCE examinations from schools in Central Uganda and schools in Northern Uganda were analysed to obtain SPA, SPI and Rate of RSPC. Secondly, the descriptive responses from the school leaders, teachers and parents were analysed through frequency counts turned into percentages. Responses from the Teachers and students using 5-likert of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), be Neutral (N), Disagree (DA), Strongly Disagree (SDA) or Very Often (VO), Often (O), Seldom (S), Not At All (NAT), Not Sure (NS) were coded as SA = 5; A = 4; N = 3; DA = 2 SDA = 1 from which the school Means (\bar{X}) were calculated. The School Means (\bar{X}) were aggregated into Regional Means (\bar{X}) and used to test the null hypothesis with t-test, $\alpha =$ one tailed = 0.05, $df = n-2$ where $n =$ number of schools to help to determine if there was any significant difference between the schools in Central Uganda and schools in Northern Uganda. The formular used was:

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2 + S_2^2}{n_1 + n_2}}}$$

11. Findings

11.1. School Strategies to Encourage the Parents to Contribute towards Their Children’s Education Process

The strategies laid by schools to encourage parents to contribute towards their children’s education process in Central and Northern Uganda was investigated from the school leaders, teachers and students. The school leaders encourage the parents to participate in school activities and to contribute financially, materially and morally towards the education process of their children. The frequency of responses from the headteachers is shown in [Table 1](#).

From [Table 1](#) it is observed that although schools both Central and Northern Uganda organize “Class Days” and “Academic Week” meetings, more schools 85.7% in Central as compared to only 60% in Northern hold these meetings. On the whole, schools from Central Uganda encouraged the parents of their students to participate in school activities more than those from Northern Uganda. They encouraged face to face interactions and openness with the parents through encouraging them to meet each subject teacher for advice (14.3%); organising “House Meetings” and encouraging parents to express their views freely during those meetings and considering Parents’ views (14.3%); instituting Parents’ meetings with administration and subject teachers for challenged students (14.3%); and encouraging the parents to check on the progress of the children on any day of the week (14.3%); that were only unique to Central Uganda on top of what all the head teachers said they were doing. Results in ([Table 1](#)) further revealed that headteachers in Northern Uganda do not encourage the participation of the parents to contribute to the education process of their children through activities 4, 7, 8, and 9. Considering activities 1, 2 and 3 that all headteachers said they were carrying out, higher percentages of head teachers from schools in Central Uganda 42.9%; 28.6%; and 85.7%; than from Northern Uganda (40%; 20%; and 60%) reported that they were carrying out those activities ([Table 1](#)). Meanwhile the headteachers of the schools in Northern Uganda communicated to the parents through letters (circulars) rather than encouraging face to face interactions as reported by 40% of the headteachers from Northern Uganda who responded ([Table 1](#)).

All the head teachers (100%) from Central Uganda have revealed that majority of the parents respond positively to requests and calls but, only 60% of the head teachers from Northern Uganda revealed that majority of the parents were positive, while the 40% revealed that few parents were still learning to respond positively, otherwise their responses to the requests and calls to participate and additionally contribute to their children’s education process apart from paying tuition was previously poor ([Table 2](#)).

The Career Guidance Teachers (CGT) of schools from both Central and Northern Uganda as well reflected that those schools in Central Uganda encourage parents of their students to participate in Career Guidance processes more than those in Northern Uganda. All 100% Career Guidance Teachers (CGT) of schools from Central Uganda who participated revealed that they encourage parents to participate in Career Guidance process while only 87.5% from Northern Uganda reported the same. The career guidance processes they encourage the parents to participate in include: Organising parents’ meetings with their children and undergo the process of Career planning; organising a fora for parents to give parenting talks to the students during Class and House Days; organising joint workshops for parents, teachers and students where Resource Persons are invited to give keynote addresses before plenary Sessions; and inviting some parents to act as Facilitators of Role Models. Further, they initiate “Academic Family” meetings where Parents, Teachers and Students discuss Career related issues (Mothers’ Meeting, Fathers’ Meeting). Further still Parents of indiscipline children are invited to jointly with Teachers and Management talk to the students; invite selected Parents in position of responsibility to talk to students; and invite students’ parents to discuss students’ performances with parents and Academic Teachers during Visitation Days.

The DOS and CGT of schools from Central and Northern Uganda further revealed that parents from Central Uganda contribute more to their children’s education than parents from Northern Uganda ([Table 3](#)).

As seen from (Table 3), all the parents play their parental roles of paying school dues, availing the children with scholastic materials, providing pocket money and other students' requirements and guidance and counseling (Table 3). But according to the DOS and CGT, the parents from Central Uganda contribute more towards the teaching learning process of their children than those from Northern Uganda. The parents show interest in their children's academic progress through: constantly checking on the progress and talking to teachers; attending "Class", "Day" and "House" Meetings and discussing performances of their children and agreeing on way forward during those meetings; and forming Parents' and Students' Committees at "Class" and "House" levels to assess the progress of academic programmes in their schools. The parents are further reported to be supporting school programmes wholeheartedly through funding, sending the children for camps, seminars, and field trips. The parents also help their children in doing assignments, reward their children for excellent performances, scold their children for poor performances and facilitate remedial lessons. In comparison, the DOS and CGTs of schools from Northern Uganda did not state these roles played by the parents from Central Uganda apart from the general parental roles that were played by all the parents, activities 1, 2, 3, and 8 (Table 3). Even roles 14 and 15 (Table 3), played by parents from Northern Uganda as stated by the DOS and CGTs from Northern Uganda are not core contributions towards academic achievement. Therefore, the parents of students studying in schools from Northern Uganda play fewer roles than the parents of those studying from Central Uganda and therefore contribute less to the education process of their children than the parents from Central Uganda. This makes the students of schools from Central Uganda have advantage over the students studying in schools from Northern Uganda that their parents are more involved and therefore contribute more support towards their education process.

11.2. Assessment of the level of Participation and Contributions by Parents

Null hypothesis: *"The contribution of parents towards students' performance in UCE examinations by parents of students studying in Central Uganda is not better than contributions by parents of students studying in Northern Uganda"*.

Parents' Contributions: The teachers' assessment did not differ from that of the headteachers and the CGTs. They revealed that parents from Central Uganda contribute more in their children's education than those from Northern Uganda. This is reflected by higher percentages 21%-47% of teachers of schools from Central Uganda compared to 16%-34% of teachers of schools from Northern Uganda who reported that parents "Very Often" help their children in homework, discuss their children's progress with the children, supplement their children's books, willingly pay extra fee, and pay school dues promptly. Up to 13%-17% of teachers of schools from Northern Uganda compared with 5%-13% of teachers of schools from Central Uganda reported that parents do "Not At All" (NAT) look through their children's books, give their children encouragement in their studies, buy the necessary books for their children's studies, willingly accept to pay extra fee and pay school dues promptly (Table 4). Further observation from Table 4 reflects that parents from Central Uganda contribute more to their children's education process than parents from Northern Uganda because, those parents from Central Uganda who participated "Very Often" and "Often" in activities 3, 6, and 9 as reflected by the percentages of teachers who responded are more (71%, 64%, and 84%) than those parents who participated in the same activities from Northern Uganda (69%, 60%, and 79%). Similarly, when considering the teachers' response that some parents do "Not At All" (NAT) participate in some activities (Table 4), there were lower percentages of teachers from Central Uganda (14%, 5%, 7%, 12% and 12%) than percentages of teachers from Northern Uganda (17%, 13%, 18%, 13% and 13%) who revealed that parents do "Not At All" (NAT) participate in activities 1, 4, 6, 7, and 8. Therefore based on teachers' assessments, the parents from Central Uganda are better at: looking through their children's books during holidays and evenings; discussing their children's progress in school; encouraging their children in studies; providing the necessary books for studies to supplement the ones the schools provide; accepting willingly to pay extra fee; paying school dues promptly; and taking their children to school and collecting them back home than the parents from Northern Uganda.

This is confirmed by the testing of the teachers' assessments statistically where the results show that t calculated for teachers (2.5087) is greater than t theoretical (2.12), α one tailed=0.05, $df=16$, rejecting null hypothesis (Tables 5 and 6). Therefore, according to the teachers, the contribution of parents towards students' performance in UCE examinations by parents from Central Uganda is better than contributions by parents from Northern Uganda". This finding puts the students studying in schools from Northern Uganda at a disadvantage because these activities where the parents are not involved in at all make the core of a parent's contribution to a student's education process and help the child to learn and excel in UCE examinations.

But the students' assessment revealed that "the contribution by parents from Central Uganda towards students' performance in UCE examinations is not better than contributions by parents from Northern Uganda" (Table 7).

There are no significant differences between the percentages of students from Central and Northern Uganda respectively in Items iv, v, viii, xi, xii, and xiii that are key for the students' good performances and t -test result shows that t calculated (1.3969) for is less than t theoretical (1.746), thus, accepting the null hypothesis "the contribution of parents towards students' performance in UCE examinations by parents of students studying in Central Uganda is not better than contributions by parents of students studying in Northern Uganda". Therefore based on the students, the parents from Central Uganda do not make better contributions to help students excel in UCE examinations than the parents from Northern Uganda (Table 8 and 9).

Although the students do not agree with the school leaders and the teachers that the parents from Central Uganda do not contribute more to their education process than those from Northern Uganda, the parents themselves

agreed with the school leaders and the teachers. This is an indication that the students were not exposed enough but knew only what happened with them rather than other fellow students elsewhere. According to parents from both Central and Northern Uganda, all parents ensure that they fulfill the requirements that are required by the regulation, usually, included on the children's report cards or admission letters. For instance, they pay fees, provide scholastic materials, carry out guidance and counseling, encourage their children to read and revise and pay coaching fee. But according to the parents from Central Uganda, they go further to keenly look at the child's results, after which, encourage them to read harder when the results are not good or reward them when the results are good; offer to do some home-work with the child; and try to act as a role model. The parents ensure that they provide conducive environment for their children's studies while at home; and identify teachers who can help them in their weak areas. But above all, the parents ensure that their children are taken to Boarding schools for proper concentration. The children are encouraged to be self-motivated, self-driven and have clear consciousness to enable them work hard. For instance, they are encouraged to have discussions with fellow students from other schools, especially, those schools that perform better in UCE examinations. Therefore, the parents from Central Uganda are more willing to invest time and money in their children's education process.

In comparison, the parents from Northern Uganda do not seem to show much sign of concern in the performances of their children. They mainly perform routine roles (1, 5, 7, 8, and 9) that are usually part of requirements, plus usual parental roles (15, 16, and 17) (Table 7). Therefore, the parents from Northern Uganda invest less money, effort and time in their children's education.

Therefore the students studying in schools from Central Uganda are at an advantage compared to those studying in schools from Northern Uganda. The parents from Central Uganda help the students to be self-motivated and work hard while the parents in Northern Uganda tend to make the students depend on them for guidance.

12. Discussions

This study found out that the school leaders (HTs, DOS and CGTs) from Central Uganda involved the parents of their students more than those leaders from Northern Uganda. They encouraged face to face interactions and openness with the parents through encouraging parents to meet each subject teacher for advice; organising House Meetings and encouraging parents to express their views freely during those and considering Parents' views; instituting Parents' meetings with administration and subject teachers for challenged students; and encouraging the parents to check on the progress of the children on any day of the week; that were only unique to Central Uganda on top of what all the head teachers said they do. Considering activities 1, 2 and 3 that all headteachers said they carry out, higher percentages of headteachers from schools in Central Uganda than from Northern Uganda reported that they carry out those activities (Table 1). Meanwhile the Headteachers of the schools in Northern Uganda communicate to the parents through letters (circulars) rather than encouraging face to face interactions. The school leaders from Central Uganda are encouraging School-based participation where parents participate in school initiated activities such as volunteering to assist the school and teachers or agreeing to become involved in decision making process through PTA, School Councils and other Parent Organisations. The parents are further encouraged to: attend school organised meetings like "Class day" and "House" Meetings during which among other things performances of their children are discussed and way forward for their children; form "Parents' and Students' Committees" at House and Class Levels to maintain dormitories and assess the progress of Academic programmes in their schools. Parents are encouraged to support school programmes whole heartedly such as through funding of sending children to camps, seminars and field trips and participating in organising remedial classes with teachers by providing the relevant facilitation This agrees with what Epstein *et al.* (2002) and Lareau (1996) found where the parents have been made to complement the work of schools through providing their children (in schools) with the materials and support that they need to learn well. But the parents from Northern Uganda are only involved in supporting school related activities through providing school fees and scholastic materials, disciplining their children and providing them with moral support but not in the management of these schools like their counter parts in schools in Central Uganda except as members of Board of Governors (BOGs), Parents' Teachers' Associations (PTAs) where they were even not fully involved in the decision making process/administration of the schools as indicated in Table 3.

There was also Parent-teacher communication amongst the teachers and parents of schools in Central Uganda about the progress of the children such as identify teachers in their weak areas and ask the teacher to help them more; attending school organised meetings like "Class day" and "House" Meetings during which among other things performances of their children are discussed and way forward for their children as found by Epstein (2001); Keyes (2002); Sheldon (2002); Dearing *et al.* (2006); Driessen *et al.* (2005); Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (2005); Nettle (2008); Waanders *et al.* (2007). Thus, as Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (2005) found, it boosted students' perceived control and competence, offered a sense of security and connectedness, and helped students to internalize educational values. This has led to students of schools from Central Uganda learning more, performing better in UCE examinations and the schools getting better SPI ($69\% \leq 118\%$) than the schools from Northern Uganda ($71\% \leq 163\%$) in UCE examinations, Appendix 1, page 206). Based on the findings by Barnard (2004), parental involvement in school was significantly associated with lower rates of high-school drop-out, increased on-time high-school completion and highest grade completed. This findings confirmed those of Campbell (1992), Lareau (1996), Fagan and Iglesias (1999), Epstein *et al.* (2002), Nancy and Lorraine (2004), Alma and Janet (2007), (Nyamusana, 2010) and Kaahwa (2012) who all found that parental involvement was a powerful lever for raising achievement in schools. Where parents and teachers worked together to improve learning, the gains in achievement were significant.

They develop a two way relationship with parents based on mutual trust, respect and a commitment to improved learning outcomes. Where schools made concerted efforts to engage parents, evidence showed that the effect on pupil's behaviour was positive.

Teachers have revealed none participation of parents of students from schools in Northern Uganda in the teaching learning process of their children. There were higher percentages 13%-17% of teachers of schools from Northern Uganda than percentages 5%-13% of teachers of schools from Central Uganda who reported that parents do "not at all" look through their children's books, give their children encouragement in their studies, buy the necessary books for their children's studies, willingly accept to pay extra fee and pay school dues promptly (Table 3). Nancy and Lorraine (2004) as cited by Nyamusana (2010) stated the ways through which the parents can get involved which among other activities included assisting in academic activities at home and providing them with moral support. Parental expectation for children's educational achievement was the strongest factor relationship with students' academic achievement Fan and Chen (2001). Parental expectation and support for their children's learning was found to create the conditions for improved student outcomes. Jones and White (2000) found small, yet statistically significant, relationship between parents' involvement in learning activities at home and their children's language achievement scores. Gonzalez-DeHass *et al.* (2005) found out that when parents were involved in students' learning, students reported increased effort, concentration, attention, interest in and responsibility for learning and higher perceived competence. Parental encouragement and promise was linked to students' intrinsic motivation while over-controlling monitoring of homework and use of extrinsic rewards were linked to extrinsic motivation. In addition, the students were found to have adopted a mastery goal orientation to learning, which meant that they were more likely to seek challenging tasks, persist with academic challenges and experience satisfaction in their school work. This finding puts the students studying in schools from Northern Uganda at a disadvantage because these activities where the parents are not involved in "at all" make the core of a parent's contribution to a student's education process and help the child to learn and excel in UCE examinations.

13. Theory Implication

The assumption that the Secondary Schools in Uganda are heterogeneous in terms of level of resources, time and efforts contributed by parents towards the education of their children based on the Resource Based View by Mugimu (2004) applies. The schools in Central Uganda have managed to mobilise the parents of their students to become part of the schools' human resources by encouraging them to participate in school organised activities to help to participate in decision making process of the school (PTA, BOG, Class, and House Committee meetings). They add more resources (books, finances and other materials) to what the schools have. The parents have been made to complement the work of schools through providing their children (in schools) with the materials and support that they need to learn well leading to inequities in the resources and education process placing students from Northern Region where there is poor level of parents' contribution to disadvantage in learning that affect students' performance in examinations and SPI.

14. Conclusions

The parents have played a role in causing variation in the performance levels of the candidates of UCE examinations between schools in Central and Northern Uganda. The students in Central Uganda have more advantage than the students from Northern Uganda because their Parents are more willing to contribute resources like the necessary text books, and their efforts and time to visit and discuss the weaknesses and strengths of their children with teachers and management, participate in school meetings such as Class, House, and Low performance meetings, assist the children doing assignments while the parents from Northern Uganda only pay fees and other necessary dues and participate in PTA and BOG meetings only. This is because the school leaders from Central Uganda have the capability to mobilise the Parents to form part of the Human resource, such that they effectively participated in the decision making process of the school through PTA, BOG, House, Class, etc. Committee meetings. They were also able to complement the resources of the school by providing the extra requirements for their children. Therefore, higher SPI in UCE examinations observed in schools in Central Uganda are not by chance, but a reflection of the contributions efforts and time of the parents who are willing to contribute materially, financially and morally to the requirements of the teaching learning process of their children confirming the theory by Penrose (1959) as cited by Mugimu (2004).

Recommendations

School leaders, especially, of schools in Northern Uganda therefore need to sensitize and encourage parents to contribute their efforts, time and the necessary materials and finances more in their children's school as found by Avisati *et al.* (2010) in France and Rachel *et al.* (2011) in Kenya, where the parents' involvement in their children's education was emphasised and parents were provided with better information on the school system, including information on the roles and responsibilities of various personnel and school offices. A workshop could be organised to encourage parents to become more involved and make them realize the importance of their participation.

Head teachers should enhance community relationships and create new opportunities that encourage community involvement beyond the traditional parent-teacher conferences or associations. The head teachers should spend time

to know the broader community surrounding the school and the people who are respected in the community. The head teachers must look for community strengths that might be contributing to problems and underscores the importance of a broader cooperation between the head teachers, staff, students and parents for effective management of discipline, thereby highlighting the importance of community involvement in the affairs of the school, thereby improving school performances in UCE examinations and improving SPI.

However, there is need for further research on the barriers that are preventing the parents from Northern Uganda to get fully involved in their children's education process.

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Table-1. School Strategies to encourage Parents to contribute to their children’s Education Process as reported by the headteachers Stated by Headteachers

Head teachers’ Strategies to encourage parents to help their children to excel in their performances in UCE examinations.	Central Uganda (%)	Northern Uganda (%)
1. The parents under their Association (PTA) are encouraged to have regular meetings with the school management.	42.9	40
2. The parents are requested to assist the school financially and morally.	28.6	20
3. The school organise “Class Days” and “Academic Weeks” meetings which help to connect students, parents and teachers where students’ performances are discussed.	85.7	60
4. Parents are encouraged to meet each subject teacher for advice;	14.3	
5. Parents are encouraged to buy the necessary school requirements;	28.6	40
6. Parents are encouraged to pay school fees in time;	14.3	40
7. The school encourages parents to express their views freely and the school considers Parents’ views during the House Meetings;	14.3	
8. The school instituted Parents’ meetings with administration and subject teachers for challenged students;	14.3	
9. The school encourages the parents to check on the progress of the child on any day of the week;	14.3	
10. School writes circulars to parents to advise them to encourage their children to study while at home during holidays.		40

Bolded percentages (%) are unique to respective Regions

Table-2. Parents’ Responses as stated by Head teachers

What are the Parents’ responses to the requests by the school?	Central Uganda	Northern Uganda
1. Majority of the parents are positive and ready to work with the school in realistic calls.	100	60
2. Quite encouraging now. Otherwise was very poor previously		20
3. A few parents are positive they buy the required books and pay fees in time		20

Table-3. How Parents help their children to excel in their performances in UCE examinations as stated by DOSs and CGTs

How Parents help their children to excel in their performances in UCE examinations	Central Uganda		Northern Uganda	
	DOS (%)	CGT (%)	DOS (%)	CGT (%)
1. Paying school dues in time	55.6	20	87.5	100
2. Availing their children with scholastic materials	55.6	20	100	100
3. Advising the school on teaching-learning process	44.4		12.5	
4. Showing interest in their children's academic progress by constantly checking on their progress and talking to teachers	33.3	20		
5. Attending school organised meetings like Class Day and House Meetings during which among other things performances of their children are discussed and way forward for their children	22.2	20		
6. Forming Parents' and Students' Committees at House and Class Levels to maintain dormitories and assess the progress of Academic programmes in their schools	22.2			
7. Providing pocket money and other requirements for their children	22.2		100	50
8. Getting involved in Guidance and Counseling.	22.2		100	100
9. Supporting school programmes whole heartedly such as through funding of sending children to camps, seminars and field trips	11.1	60		
10. Participating in helping the children in doing the assignments.	11.1			
11. Rewarding the children when they perform well.		80		
12. Participating in organising remedial classes with teachers by providing the relevant facilitation		20		
13. Scolding their children for poor performances		20		
14. Following up in disciplined children			37.5	25
15. Providing friendly environment for their children while at home				12.5

Bolded percentages are unique to the respective Regions

Table-4. Teachers' assessment of Parents' contribution to help Students excel in UCE examinations Central and Northern Uganda

	Central Uganda						Northern Uganda					
	VO (%)	O (%)	S (%)	NAT (%)	NS (%)	TOT (%)	VO (%)	O (%)	S (%)	NAT (%)	NS (%)	TOT (%)
1. Parents look through children's books during holidays/in the evenings	17	43	19	14	7	100	26	44	10	17	3	100
2. Parents help children in homework	35	42	5	16	2	100	27	57	11	3	3	100
3. Parents discuss with children about their progress in school	29	42	17	10	2	100	16	53	21	10	0	100
4. Parents give children encouragement in their studies	21	37	32	5	5	100	24	38	11	13	14	100
5. Parents spend time meeting their children's teachers	19	40	17	21	3	100	27	43	11	14	5	100
6. Parents buy	21	43	24	7	5	100	19	41	22	18	0	100

the necessary books for children's studies to supplement the ones school provides													
7. Parents willingly accept to pay extra fee on what the Government has gazetted	35	35	16	12	2	100	29	45	13	13	0	100	
8. Parents pay school dues promptly	35	35	16	12	2	100	29	45	13	13	0	100	
9. Parents take the children to school and collect them back for holidays	47	37	7	7	2	100	34	45	18	3	0	100	
10. Parents do not condone the indiscipline of their children	21	44	19	11	5	100	30	41	19	7	3	100	

Table-5. Summary of Means of Responses by Teachers on Parents' Contributions to help students excel in UCE examinations

School	School Mean (Teachers)	School	School Mean (Teachers)
A. Kings college Budo	4	St. Mary's Ediofe Girls' School	3.62
B. Gayaza High School	4.11	Gulu High School	2.78
C. Kibuli Secondary School	3.82	Kitgum High School	3.64
D. Kyambogo College School	3.5	St. Joseph's College Layibi	3.6
E. Makerere College School	4.25	Muni Girls' School	3.09
F. Mengo Secondary School	4.07	Mvara Secondary School	3.9
G. Trinity College Nabbingo	4.06	St. Aloysious College Nyapea	1.81
H. Nabisunsa Girls' School	4.36	St. Joseph's College Ombaci	3.47
I. St. Mary's Namagunga	4.18		
J. Our Lady of Good Counsel Gayaza	4.5		

Table-6. Summary of T-Test for regional Means for Teachers' assessment of Parents' Contributions to help students excel in UCE examinations

	Central Uganda	Northern Uganda
Variance	0.078361111	0.457355357
Average	4.0928	3.23875
n	10	8

df = (n-2) = 16
t calculated = 2.5087
t theoretical = 2.12
α One tailed = 0.05

Table-7. Students' Assessment of Parents' Contribution to help Students to Excel in UCE examinations Central and Northern Uganda

	Central Uganda						Northern Uganda					
	VR (%)	R (%)	S (%)	NAT (%)	NS (%)	TOT (%)	VR (%)	R (%)	S (%)	NAT (%)	NS (%)	TOT (%)
i) My Parents look through my books during holidays/in the evenings	18	31	28	17	6	100	37	20	23	10	10	100
ii) My Parents spend time to meeting my teachers	31	27	17	17	9	100	27	25	24	14	10	100
iii) My Parents help me in my homework	22	13	21	35	9	100	16	23	20	23	18	100
iv) My Parents discuss with me about my	64	25	4	4	3	100	56	31	5	5	3	100

progress in school												
v) My Parents give me encouraging words in my studies	74	22	3	1	0	100	69	27	2	2	0	100
vi) My Parents buy the necessary books for my studies to supplement the ones school provides	43	29	17	6	5	100	38	23	16	10	13	100
vii) My parents engage skilled teachers for me for special disciplines	24	18	13	26	19	100	27	10	15	29	19	100
viii) My Parents encourage good discipline from me	72	22	6	0	0	100	75	22	3	0	0	100
ix) My Parents discuss my problems with my teachers	19	23	29	16	13	100	25	24	34	10	7	100
x) My Parents attend PTA and other Parents meetings in the School	41	29	12	9	9	100	43	21	10	10	16	100
xi) My Parents pay my Tuition and other charges promptly or negotiates with the School Authorities to enable me return to school promptly	70	21	3	3	3	100	75	10	0	10	5	100
xii) My Parents demand for my Reports when I go Home for Holidays	77	14	8	0	1	100	80	15	5	0	0	100
xiii) My parents are usually tough on me when they learn that I am involved in an in disciplined act at School	67	23	8	0	2	100	71	15	10	2	2	100

Table-8. Summary of Means of Responses by Students on Parents' Contributions to help students excel in UCE examinations

School	School Mean (Students)	School	School Mean (Students)
Kings college Budo	4.06	St. Mary's Ediofe Girls' School	4.42
Gayaza High School	4.22	Gulu High School	4.03
Kibuli Secondary School	4.08	Kitgum High School	3.68
Kyambogo College School	3.68	St. Joseph's College Layibi	3.77
Makerere College School	4.27	Muni Girls' School	3.54
Mengo Secondary School	3.88	Mvara Secondary School	3.98
Trinity College Nabbingo	4.06	St. Aloysious College Nyapea	3.56
Nabisunsa Girls' School	4.06	St. Joseph's College Ombaci	3.64
St. Mary's Namagunga	4.73		
Our Lady of Good Counsel Gayaza	3.99		

Table-9. Summary of T-Test for regional Means for Students' assessment of Parents' Contributions to help students excel in UCE examinations

	Northern Uganda	Northern Uganda
Variance	0.07580111	0.08996429
Average	4.103	3.8275
n	10	8

df = (n-2) = 16
t calculated = 1.3969
t theoretical = 1.746
α = One tailed = 0.05

Table-10. Parents' Strategies to help their children excel in UCE examinations as stated by Parents

Parents' Strategies to help their children excel in UCE examinations as stated by Parents	Central Uganda	Northern Uganda
1. Complete fees payment on time so that the child is settled in her studies;	42.9%	40%
2. <i>Encourage them to read hard whenever the results are not good;</i>	57.1%	
3. <i>Reward them when they performs well;</i>	28.6%	
4. <i>Do some work with them;</i>	28.6%	
5. Provide text books and instructional materials;	42.9%	100%
6. <i>Act as Role models;</i>	14.3%	
7. Guide and counsel them where future plans and how to achieve them are discussed;	14.3%	20%
8. Encourage them in revision advising them to do constant reading;	28.6%	40%
9. Fund extra coaching for them;	14.3%	20%
10. <i>Offer a conducive environment for reading;</i>	14.3%	
11. <i>Identify teachers in their weak areas and ask the teacher to help them more;</i>	14.3%	
12. <i>Ensure that the child is taken to boarding section for proper concentration;</i>	14.3%	
13. <i>Encourage them to have discussions with students from different schools;</i>	14.3%	
14. <i>Encourage them to be self-motivated, self-driven, and have clear consciousness that they worked hard when results come back;</i>	14.3%	
15. Sometimes force the child to revise e.g. early in the morning.		20%
16. Visit the child during the visitation days.		20%
17. Observes them keenly during holidays		20%

Bolded percentages (%) are unique for respective Regions