SCHOOL CULTURE AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE

SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WAKISO DISTRICT, UGANDA

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Rita Nakanwagi Mutaawe, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for any academic award or publication into any other institution or University. Due acknowledgement has been made for the work of others in this report, through quotation and references.

Signed _____   Date_____

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled, "**School culture and students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district, Uganda"** constitutes original work of Rita Nakanwagi Mutaawe, done under our supervision and has been submitted with our approval for examination in Institutional Management and Leadership of Uganda Management Institute.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband Vincent and my children, Nancy, Georgina, Timothy and Matthew for their patience while 1 was away pursuing this course, and for being a source of inspiration and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined influence of school culture on student academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district. It sought to achieve three research objectives notably: to examine the influence of school symbolic behaviors, school environment and strategic direction on students' academic performance. The study adopted a cross-sectional design in which both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used to obtain data from a sample of 92 respondents who included head teachers, teachers and students. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. At univariate level, the quantitative data were presented in form of means to show the central tendency of responses. At bivariate level, the Pearson correlations and simple linear regressions were used to show the direction of relationship and the magnitude at which the independent variables affect the dependent variable. Study findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between each of the three dimensions of school culture (i.e. symbolic behaviors, school environment and school culture strategic direction) and academic performance of students. The study thus concluded that the three independent variables have a positively significant influence in explaining students' academic performance. On the basis of the study findings, it was recommended that schools seeking to improve students' performance should focus on working diligently to create a healthy school culture. Specifically, school leaders need to understand the values, practices and norms of the schools which they are leading. By having this knowledge, they will be able to influence teachers, students and the community to understand the school symbolic behaviors and they will all work towards a common goal of improving students' academic outcomes. In addition, heads of schools should always care and focus on the specific aspects of the dimensions of school environment that affect the culture of the school in order promote student achievement. Lastly, the strategic direction of each school

should be well articulated, made available and accessible to the school community as a whole. In terms of research, future research should among others focus on the influence of other organizational factors influencing the academic performance of students. Such areas could be community factors, changes in technology, the influence of the media as well as commercialization of the Education sector.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Creation of a positive school culture is seen as one of the approaches aimed at improving students' academic achievement. According to Barney (1986), cited by Nsubuga (2008), culture is a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that define the way in which an organization conducts itself to achieve its goals. Through the school's vision, mission, values and traditions, a well- built school culture of excellence and discipline plays a pivotal role in the enhancement of the school's progress. Indeed, schools with a strong culture of excellence have and will always remain so irrespective of a change in headship. More specifically, effective schools are characterized by an orderly environment. For long, organizational theorists have reported that paying attention to culture is the most important action that a leader can perform. According to Watson (2001), if the culture is not hospitable to learning, then student achievement suffers. For this reason, school leaders are expected to play a crucial role in the development of a healthy culture.

The aim of this study was to examine the role of school culture on the performance of students in private schools in Uganda. Chapter one presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, hypotheses, conceptual framework, scope of the study, justification of the study, significance of the study and definition of terms and concepts.

1.2. Background to the Study

The background to the study provides an over view to the study. It presents the historical perspective of school culture, theoretical background providing a guiding theoretical view and shows some of the aspects that empirically explain the links with school culture, conceptual background explains concepts used in the study whereas the contextual background provides the extent to which school culture influences students' performance.

1.2.1. Historical Background

Globally, school culture is a relatively new concept in understanding schools as organizations. The development of the term began with anthropological understandings of schools and the way they work. Neville (2008) explained that some schools are traditionally exemplary in their school cultures and yet others schools are not. Shaping and grooming of school cultures has always been related to student time tabling, decision making hierarchies or curriculum management and provision, but rather the quality of the leadership and interpersonal relationships within a school. This is because the structures and routines in the schools are the outcome of school culture (MacArthur and Gaffney, 2001).

For decades, school researchers and practitioners attempted to capture the subtle spirit of a school with the term school morale. In the past thirty years or so, this spirit has generally been called school climate. Both terms have a confusing past, and few educators seem to agree on exactly what the two terms mean. For example, Steele and Jenks (2007) looked at school climate as what it feels like to spend time in a social system, the weather in that region of social space.

Brookover (2009) conceived of climate as the composite of norms, expectations, and beliefs which characterize the school social system as perceived by members of the social system.

In recent years, the term school culture has entered the vocabulary of educators. The concept of school culture has emerged from a variety of different sources, but it draws heavily on the concept of organizational culture in the corporate workplace (Deal and Kennedy 2002 cited by Kane, 2006). Principles learned from the observation of effectively managed businesses, it has been assumed, can be applied with benefit to the operation of schools.

Anthropologist Geertz (1973) contributed the most to our current understanding of school culture. For Geertz, culture represents a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols. Those symbols include both the written (explicit) and hidden (implicit) messages encoded in language. A school's mission statement may identify some goals in the written text that focus on student achievement. But perhaps not written into the text is the implicit value the school places, or does not place, on academic success. Both the goal (better student achievement) and the underlying value (academic success) are part of school culture (Deal and Kennedy, 2002 cited by Kane, 2006).

Today in both developed and developing countries as never before, problems of the outside world encroach on the school environment. Child abuse, gangs, broken families, drugs, violence, and environmental problems all to varying degrees hinder the school's ability to educate students (Anderson, 2002). The challenge for school leaders is to shape and nurture a school culture that can address these growing problems. The school can no longer be seen as just a place for basic

instruction. For many students, it serves the function of a home, providing moral direction and a sense of belonging.

The concept of school culture offers school and district leaders a more holistic way to look at the school (Gonder et al, 2004). By deepening their understanding of culture, school leaders will be better able to influence the values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions held by all members of the school community, with the goal of building an ethos of excellence and caring. Perhaps the most important ability of today's school leader is to be a culture builder, one who instills the values of concern for others, personal and group success, and continuous improvement.

1.2.2. Theoretical Background

The study was guided by the systems theory propounded by Gregory (1972). Systems theory derives from focusing less on particulars and more on the whole. In a school culture, systems thinking leads to administrators to concentrate less on day to-day events and more on underlying trends and forces of change. Systems thinking inspire leaders to look closely at relationships. It also motivates them to shift the focus away from particular components of organizational management to the underlying causes and effects.

Gregory (1972), who was instrumental in the development of systems thinking, suggests that no element of the system can be separated without considering the effects on the whole. Bateson offers the following explanation. Thus, in no system which shows mental characteristics can any part have unilateral control over the whole. In other words, the mental characteristics of the system are imminent, not in some part, but in the system as a whole. As practitioners seek to

devise some practical strategies for change, they would do well to consider first the effects on the entire school as a system. Changing school culture may require modifications of particular components of the school and in the context of this study, these components include: symbolic behaviors, school environment and the strategic direction of the school.

1.2.3. Conceptual Background

According to Geertz (2003), some of the major elements of culture include: norms, values, beliefs, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and myths translated by a particular group of people. Thus, the values expressed in lesson plans and classroom teaching, the way the principal runs staff meetings, and the decorations displayed in hallways are all integral parts of school culture. It also encompasses many aspects of everyday life. In the school, arguably hall passes, school assemblies, and student hair styles fit within the boundaries of school culture (Gottfredson et al, 2006). This is sufficiently road to include not just verbal or written symbols, but all human symbolic behavior. This behavior includes everything from nonverbal communication to the walls of the school cafeteria. The most important aspects of culture are those whose meaning is shared by members of the social system.

School culture is therefore are historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community. In practical terms, educators speak of their school's culture when they explain to newcomers the way we do things around here. Some aspects of culture, however, are not necessarily apparent even to those who work in the school. These are the assumptions that, as Schein (2004) points out, come to be taken for granted and eventually drop out of awareness. But

those hidden assumptions continue to shape how people think about their work, relate to their colleagues, define their mission, and derive their sense of identity.

Symbolic behavior is a schools capacity to respond to or use a system of significant symbols (Faules & Alexander, 2008). The symbolic behavior perspective argues that the reality of an organization is socially constructed through communication (Cheney & Christensen, 2000; Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1996). In a school environment, symbolic behaviors are silent aspects that define the behaviors of the school. These relate to the way schools hold and practice their ceremonies, the nature of school myth in place, beliefs, norms and rituals in place. Symbolic messages are used by individuals to understand their environment and create a social reality (Faules & Alexander, 2008; Mills, 2002). When faced with uncertainty, individuals continually organize themselves within their group based reality and respond within that reality (Weick, 2005).

Symbolic behavior perspective proposes that individuals are faced with uncertainty when introduced to an organization. This uncertainty creates a reliance on symbolic messages so individuals can make sense of their environment (Brown, 2006). In order to reduce uncertainty, organizations create sets of standardized meanings depicted by symbols. As symbolic messages are interpreted by individuals, they react collectively within the organizational culture. As organizational cultures are learned, shared, and transmitted a collective social reality emerges (Harris & Nelson, 2008). Organizational cultures are created and maintained by symbolic behavior, giving managers an opportunity to create, articulate, and sustain the organization's values as individuals focus on shared values (Colvin, 2006). The symbolic nature of shared values can also reduce ambiguity and tension within an organization (Harris & Nelson, 2008,

p. 233). According to Mead's theory, a social act involves a three-part relationship: an initial gesture from one person, a response to that gesture by another, and a result. The result is what the act means for the communicator (Littlejohn & Foss, 2004).

School environment relates to school connectedness and engagement in positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families. According to Mick Zais (2011), school environment means the extent to which school settings promote student well being at school, which may include, the academic environment, the fairness and adequacy of disciplinary procedures in place, the dressing codes and the general physical environment at school that supports the academic excellence of students at school.

Academic performance is the outcome of education the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. Academic performance is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts (Annie, 2006).

1.2.4. Contextual Background

According to Gresso (2005), a lot is entailed in building a school's culture so that it can sustain innovation and improvement. Culture building is more than telling a few stories at faculty meetings and promoting a new motto for the school. It is a process that cuts deeply into the fabric of people's relationships, their patterns of communication and interaction, and their regard for their own potential as well as that of the organization they serve. An excellent culture is the net result of the activities of individuals who are themselves, both on their own and as members

of a work group, growing in identity, confidence, knowledge, cooperation, commitment, and respect.

Satisfaction and morale of students and staff are higher in schools with healthy cultures than in schools with unhealthy ones. Culture influences the final outcomes of education by how much and how well children learn. Deliberate changes in a school's culture and climate can make the school a place in which teachers feel positive about their work and students are motivated to learn. A positive school culture is associated with higher student motivation and achievement, increased teacher collaboration, and improved attitudes among teachers toward their jobs (Endeman, 2004).

Heck and Marcoulides (1996) explain that where positive social and professional relations among staff members were developed, higher student achievement was reported. Furthermore, their findings indicated that organizational norms and values were only indirectly related to higher student outcomes. More specifically, schools that foster innovation and risk taking, encourage teacher participation in decision-making and provide time for collaboration were more effective. As Heck and Marcoulides (1996) indicate, these effects of organizational values on performance are likely to be mediated by teachers' attitudes and to a lesser degree by the school's organizational climate.

Yin, (2003) profiled effective and ineffective organizational cultures in thirty-two schools, sixteen with strong culture and the other half with weak culture. The distinction between strong and weak was decided on the basis of a variety of organizational characteristics. Strength of

organizational ideology, participation, intimacy, charismatic leadership style, and authority hierarchy represent just a few of the limiting variables. After determining the variables that correlate with weak and strong cultures, Cheng compared the schools in the areas of organizational structure, teacher job attitude, and school effectiveness. Strong culture, Cheng concluded, is associated with positive organizational characteristics, teachers' job attitudes, and students' academic outcomes. That is, teachers who enjoy their jobs and students who do well academically are more likely to be found in strong school cultures than in weak ones.

Over the years, the number of private schools in Uganda has been increasing. These schools hardly do have a particular culture that guide their way of doing things. In 2011, there were 1,560 private schools as compared to 1,004 Government-aided schools in Uganda (Educational Statistical Abstract, 2011). However although some have come up with a strong performance to challenge the top Government schools, many are still performing very poorly. What is not clear though is what is driving the shift in the goal posts regarding the performance of schools in National examinations in Uganda. (The Observer, Thursday February 10-13, 2011, Vol. 6 Issue: 195, The Weekly Observer, Thursday, February 28- March 5, 2008, Vol. 4, Issue No 049, New Vision, Thursday, February 10, 2011, Vol.26 No 29). It is evident that there is a growing struggle for the top positions between the private secondary schools and the Government aided schools. Lack of culture within such schools imply that students are not guided in regard to core school beliefs, norms and practices that largely affect their academic excellence in various ways.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

World over, education is one of the sectors that are of paramount significance in the integral development of nations and in the advancement of social and individual wellbeing. Ideally, schools are expected to play an important role in the socialization process of the young people from where they learn to regulate their own conduct, respect others, manage their time responsibly and thus becoming responsible citizens. For this reason, the importance of some kind of school-wide set of values and norms of behavior are important in enhancing students' academic performance. In realization of the fact that the performance of schools is judged according to the quality of students they produce, many school administrators have tried to improve the image of their schools in the eyes of the public by introducing school basic assumptions, norms and values and cultural artifacts that are supposed to guide school members. However, there is a general out cry from the public about the core school culture is being eroded in some schools. This is manifested by the increasing cases of arson, drug abuse, strikes, alcoholism, bullying, vandalism of school property as well as general refusal to follow school rules and regulations (Mpaata, 2008). Some of these cases have resulted into loss life and property (Mpaata, 2008). It seems and appears that, contrary to the ideals of the establishment of the schools, educational values have been compromised. This has therefore created a big concern from teachers, head teachers and stakeholders about the lack of opportunity for learners to concentrate on their academic work. The general characteristic of the culture in many schools is said to be in many ways depressing, with no definite ethos, steadily drifting from the mission and visions for which these schools were built (Mugagga and Musoke 2011). As a corollary, most schools continue to experience low grades with many students below average especially among the least developed schools (Wakiso district DEOs Report, 2013).

It is against this background that the study sought to examine how school culture affects students' performance in Wakiso district. Since school culture is complex, very unique and has idiosyncratic ways of working, this study identified three aspects of school culture namely school symbolic behaviors, school environment and school strategic direction that were perceived to have a bearing on students' academic performance.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The study sought to examine the influence of school culture on students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the influence of school symbolic behaviors on student academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district.

ii. To establish the influence of school environment on student academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district.

iii. To examine the influence of school strategic direction on student academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district.

1. 6. Research Questions

i. What is the influence of school symbolic behaviors on student academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district?

ii. What is the influence of the school environment on the academic performance of students in private secondary schools in Wakiso district?

iii.   What is the influence of the school strategic direction on the academic performance of students in private secondary schools in Wakiso district?

1.7 Hypotheses of the Study

i.   School symbolic behaviors have a significant influence on students' academic performance in private secondary schools.

ii.   School environment has a significant influence on the academic performance of students in private secondary schools.

iii.   School strategic direction has a significant influence on the academic performance of students in private secondary schools.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE (IV) **DEPENDENT VARIABLE (DV)**

School Culture **Student Academic Performance**

Symbolic behaviors
- Ceremonies
- School myths
- Beliefs
- Rituals

School Environment
- School discipline
- Dress codes
- Teaching & learning styles
- Communication modes

Strategic Direction
- Mission
- Vision
- Objectives
- Goals

Student performance
- Number of grades
- Quality of grades
- Language proficiency
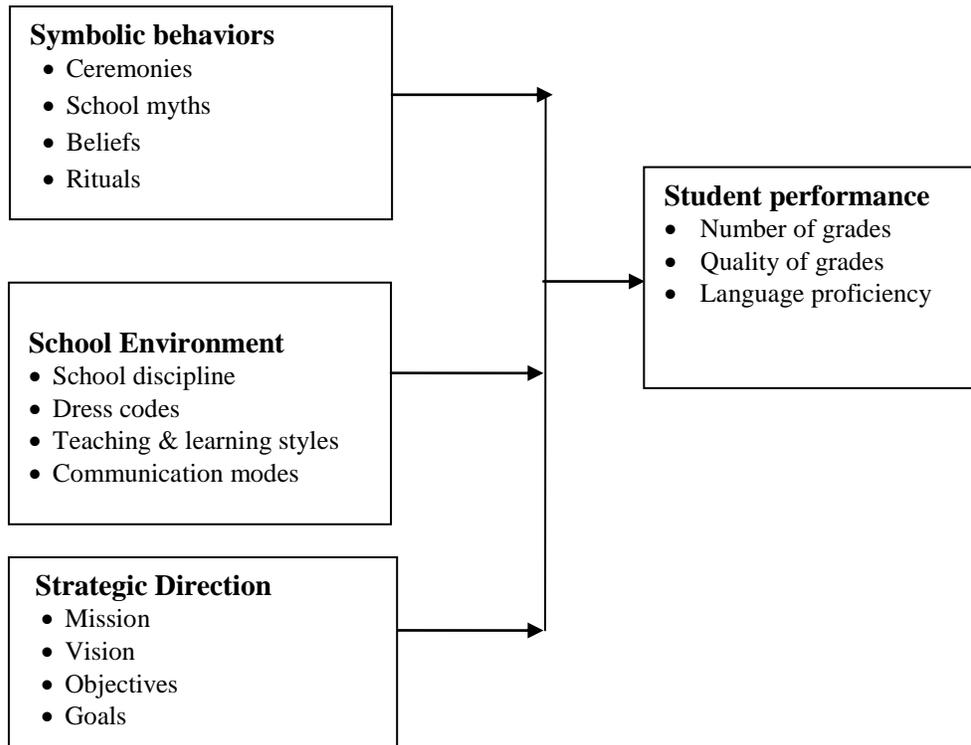
Source: Self conceptualized as guided by Gonder, Peggy Odell, and Donald Hymes, 2004.

Figure 1.1: Relationship between school culture and students performance.

The conceptual framework presents the dependent and independent variables; the independent variable is school culture and independent variable is student performance. In the conceptual framework, it is conceptualized that symbolic behaviors involve ceremonies, school myths , beliefs and rituals whereas school environment involve school discipline, dress codes, teaching & learning styles, meeting styles and strategic direction, mission, vision, objectives and goals of the school. The assumption is that if these factors are well articulated and effectively implemented in the school, students' academic performance is expected to improve.

1.9. Justification of the Study

Culture is a school variable that the school leadership and professional staff have the ability to influence. The justification for carrying out this study was that despite the existing body of literature relating school culture to test scores particularly in other countries, no empirical study had been conducted in Uganda to relate school culture to students' performance. This study was therefore worth conducting to help determine whether a positive culture correlates with improved academic performance the findings of which, might provide insight as to whether school culture is an area worthy of research to determine ways in which students' academic performance might be boosted by adhering to cultural norms, vision and mission of the school. The possible advantages to an improvement in students' academic outcomes include a more promising future for those students and a more favorable attitude of the public towards private secondary schools. If a statistical link can be demonstrated, then practitioners and policymakers may consider these results as worthy of investigation and inclusion in policy and practice decisions.

1.10 Scope of the Study

The scope covered the boundaries of the study in terms of the geographical and content scope.

1.10.1 Geographical Scope

Geographically, the study was carried out in private Secondary Schools of Wakiso District which included: St Charles Lwanga Secondary school Kibiri, Aidan College Ndejje and Mary Reparatrix secondary School Bugonga. The first two schools are located in the county of Kyadondo while the latter is in Busiro. The fact that this district has a diversity of private secondary schools gave a good representation of the area of study. It is also within easy access for the researcher.

1.10.2 Content Scope

In terms of the content, the researcher concentrated on school culture and students performance. The study specifically looked at school environment, symbolic behaviors and school strategic direction aspects.

1.10.3 Time Scope

The study covered the period from 2010 to 2013. It is during this period that many private secondary schools were started within Wakiso District.

1.11 Significance of the Study

It is anticipated that the study will be significant to different stakeholders in the following ways:

School Managers: The information gathered in this study could be used to inform school managers of the main issues related to school culture challenges and strategies that may be used in the district to restore school cultures that help students to perform well. This could be done basing on the recommendations that will be made and when they are implemented they may help to improve school culture hence improve on academic performance of students.

Teachers: The study is expected to identify the major aspects of school culture, the school administration and teachers could to draw appropriate strategies to improve it. Therefore, teachers may become major partners in development and get involved in the management of schools to promote culture among their schools.

Policy makers: As individuals charged with formulating policies, their understanding of school culture remain very vital in the education management process, findings from this study may

help them in formulating better strategic policies to have better ways to promoting school culture to avoid its effects on their academic performance of students.

Researchers: The issues raised in this study are likely to lead to the involvement of various researchers in generating more knowledge and could form a basis for further research to those interested in school culture and its management.

Researcher student: the study will act as contribution to getting the masters degree and it will help the researcher understand deeply the major aspects related to school culture and in the long run the researcher could be consulted on the issue since she will have vast knowledge on the aspect.

1.12 Operational Definitions of Terms and Concepts

School culture: The way schools portray themselves or do things as known by the school surroundings and other community members that uniquely identifies them from other schools in the surrounding or community that largely defines their academic performance.

Symbolic behavior: Includes the Values, objectives, mission and beliefs of the school.

Strategic direction: includes the central forces such as vision, mission, strategies, tactics and core values that propel a school toward its intended objectives.

Student Academic performance: Evaluation of students' periodic academic performance as measured by periodical examinations or continuous assessment in both final national and school exams.

School environment: The physical and aesthetic surroundings and the psychosocial climate of the school

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of literature related to the topic of study. The purpose of the review is to examine how school culture influences the academic performance of students. The literature is presented in form of theoretical review, school culture symbolic behaviors, school culture practices and school culture strategic direction and how all these influence the academic performance of students.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Systems theory as propounded Karl Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1969). Systems theory derives from focusing less on particulars and more on the whole. In a school culture, systems thinking leads to administrators to concentrate less on day to-day events and more on underlying trends and forces of change. Systems thinking inspire leaders to look closely at relationships. It also motivates them to shift the focus away from particular components of organizational management to the underlying causes and effects. Gregory (1972), who was instrumental in the development of systems thinking, suggests that no element of the system can be separated without considering the effects on the whole.

In no system which shows mental characteristics can any part have unilateral control over the whole. In other words, the mental characteristics of the system are imminent, not in some part, but in the system as a whole. As practitioners seek to devise some practical strategies for change,

they would do well to consider first the effects on the entire school as a system. Changing school culture may require modifications of particular components of the school, but the outcome will not be successful without a more holistic focus Gregory (1972).

A system in this frame of reference can contain regularly interacting or interrelating groups of activities. For example, in noting the influence in organizational psychology as the field evolved from an individually oriented industrial psychology to a systems and developmentally oriented organizational psychology, some theorists recognize that organizations have complex social systems; separating the parts from the whole reduces the overall effectiveness of organizations(Lester,2008).This difference, from conventional models that center on individuals, structures, departments and units, separates in part from the whole, instead of recognizing the interdependence between groups of individuals, structures and processes that enable an organization to function. Laszlo (2008) explain that the relationship between organizations and their environments can be seen as the foremost source of complexity and interdependence. In most cases, the whole has properties that cannot be known from analysis of the constituent elements in isolation.

2.2. Review of the related literature

The following subsection entail the review of the literature related to the influence of the dimensions of school culture on the academic outcomes of learners

2.2.1 School Symbolic Behavior and Student Academic Performance

The values and beliefs level, according to Schein, defines the basic organizational character of the school. Through shared values and beliefs, members of the organization develop a sense of

direction that guides their day-to-day behavior (Joan & Shirley 2003). Values are enacted as part of the daily school routine. If the school has designated respect as an important value, people are expected to treat others with consideration and concern. Likewise, teachers, principals, and other staff express certain beliefs about the value of education. Practitioners bring with them a particular set of principles that reflect the very nature of education at the school. For example, a teacher may believe in the value of experiential learning. This belief, then, becomes an expression of culture as reflected in her actions.

Values and beliefs are not always explicit. They are often a reflection of experience. The verbal and written symbols encode what is valued and believed, and so do the hidden or implicit dimensions of our language. For example a sign in a school's front office says, a clean desk is a sign of a sick mind. The sign is not intended to be taken literally. Not all people who have clean desks are mentally ill; rather, the sign speaks to a cultural norm. It may imply that a more relaxed environment is valued, or it may speak to the busy nature of the office (Schein, 2004). The sign's intended message is implicit.

In symbolic behaviors best friends have been found to be similar in regards to frequency of cutting class and time spent on homework. Landau (2002) supports this conclusion by stating that students who care about learning are more likely to associate with peers who share this interest in academics than those who have less interest in learning. The personal value that an individual attaches to a characteristic also affects the individual's response to change. High value results in resistance to change, and low value results in receptiveness to change (Ryan, 2006).

Ryan (2000) found that peer groups are influential regarding changes in students' intrinsic value for school as well as achievement. The peer group is not, however, influential regarding changes in students' utility value for school. It was found that associating with friends who have a positive affect toward school enhanced students' own satisfaction with school, whereas associating with friends who have a negative affect toward school decreased it (Ryan, 2006).

Landau (2002) stress that peer influence relates to athletics, dating, and sexual behavior, as well as alcohol, drug, and tobacco use have been shown to be important for friendship choice in adolescence. For some adolescents, other interests may compete with or take charge over similar academic motivation and engagement as criteria for selecting a peer group. This could put an adolescent's motivation and engagement in school in a precarious position (Ryan, 2006). Through selection, some adolescents may place themselves in peer group situations that support or foster their achievement-related beliefs and behaviors. Others may place themselves in contexts that weaken achievement related beliefs and behaviors. Contrary to popular belief, not all peer influence is negative. Spending more time with peers does not always translate into trouble (Lingren, 1995). The peer group is a source of affection, sympathy, understanding, and a place for experimentation. It is always possible for parents to talk with school counselors and professionals to help with the problem.

At the deepest, least tangible level of organizational culture are underlying assumptions the symbols, values, and beliefs that are not clearly recognizable but continue to shape the behavior of the organization's members. Much the same way we are unaware of gravity until we fall, some parts of culture are hidden until they are made explicit. The aspects of culture are hidden in

the unconscious dimensions of school life and taken for granted by those who work there. As Bowers & David (2005) assert, cultural patterns are experienced by the individual as part of a worldview that is transparent or taken for granted. A principal tells a parent that buses and front gates are monitored by teachers before and immediately after school. The explicit message assures the parent that his or her student will be safe before and after school. The implicit or underlying message evokes safety as a high priority and value of the school, principal, and staff (Witcher, 2003).

2.2.2 School Environment And Student Academic Performance

When students find their school environment to be supportive and caring, they are less likely to become involved in substance abuse, violence, and other problem behaviors (Battistich & Hom 2007; Resnick et al. 2007). They are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward themselves and prosodies attitudes and behaviors toward others (Battistich, & Solomon 2007). Much of the available research shows that supportive schools foster these positive outcomes by promoting students' sense of connectedness (Resnick et al. 2007), belongingness (Baumeister & Leary 2005), or community (Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon 2007) during the school day. Connectedness, belongingness, and community all refer to students' sense of being in close, respectful relationships with peers and adults at school.

Students' academic success is greatly influenced by the type of school environment they attend. School factors include school structure, school composition and school climate. The school that one attends is the institutional environment that sets the parameters of a students' learning experience. School environment also looks at teaching skills, climate, socioeconomic conditions,

and student achievement (Hoy, Kottkamp & Rafferty, 2003). Depending on the environment, schools can either open or close the doors that lead to academic performance (Barry, 2005).

School climate is closely linked to the interpersonal relations between students and teachers. According to Crosnoe *et al.* (2004), school climate is the general atmosphere of school. Trust between students and teachers increases if the school encourages teamwork.

The important role of the teachers in the teaching-learning process is unquestionable. Teachers have a lot of influence on their classroom practices. Teachers should have and apply specific abilities without which their influence may not be reflected in their students' performance in their subject. Teachers must use appropriate and effective instructional methods so that students can easily transfer what is taught in school and apply it to solve problems in real life. On the contrary, Kara and Russell (2001) assert that there has been no consensus on the importance of specific teacher factors, leading to the common conclusion that the existing empirical evidence does not find a strong role for teachers in the determination of academic achievement. The study therefore sought to investigate the influence of teacher characteristics on students' performance: whether teachers give assignment, mark and revise on time and reward or motivate the students' to learn.

In school environment, direct school-level measures such as the building and physical environment, and the school social and psychological environments have been used often (Crosnoe et al., 2004). Kombo (2005) observes that the leadership style of the head teacher creates a kind of learning environment. A cordial relationship between the head teacher and

learners creates an environment conducive to learning as discussions are encouraged and learners are listened to. The head teacher works together with students on how to succeed in life and in academic work. In such a school, every member is useful in decision making process and students are usually disciplined and possess positive academic attitudes. The head teacher has a formal relationship with several other people or groups of people both inside and outside the school system. Therefore, the image of the school is seen through the administrative capabilities of the head teacher.

School environment is characterized peer pressure is also defined as when people of one's own age encourage or urging the person to do something or to keep from doing something else, no matter if the person personally want to do it or not (Ryan, 2000). The more subtle form of peer pressure is known as peer influence, and it involves changing one's behavior to meet the perceived expectations of others (Burns & Darling, 2002). In general, most teens conform to peer pressure on fairly insignificant things like music, clothing, or hairstyles. When it comes to more important issues like moral values, parents still remain more influential than the peer group (Black, 2002). Participating in peer group activities is a primary stage of development and adolescents' identities are often closely associated with that of their peers (Santor et al., 2002).

A number of students see some of their peers as role models. Teachers, parents and peers all provide adolescents with suggestions and feedback about what they should think and how they should behave in social situations. Modeling refers to individual changes in cognition, behavior, or effects that result from the observation of others (Ryan, 2003). Observing others perform a

particular behavior or voice a certain opinion can introduce an individual to new behaviors and viewpoints that may be different from his or her own.

Depending on the age of children, different colours are considered stimulating; younger children prefer bright colours and patterns while adolescents prefer more subdued colours (Engelbrecht, 2003). However, Pile (2007) suggests strong, warm colours for young children, and warns against the use of intense primary colours. Different preferences for particular colours have been found between males and females (Rosenstein, 2005) with Radeloff (1990) suggesting that males prefer bright colours while females prefer soft colours. Yet, conversely, Ou et al. (2004) argue there is no difference in colour preference between males and females. However, Sundstrom (1986) points out that those experiments that determine people's colour preferences generally involve small patches of colour that are viewed for a short period. He argues that the findings do not show what colours people prefer their offices to be painted.

Various school practices define the culture of each school. Teachers and administrators looking for a practical way of understanding school culture might first ask themselves what makes their own school unique. One thing that makes each school unique is the language and symbols used in the school (Thacker et al, 2002). In another school, a principal pairs at-risk students with breakfast Buddies. List those artifacts that are significant in shaping your school's culture. Begin with the language people use in offices, classrooms, and hallways. The list doesn't have to be exhaustive but should include language heard in everyday conversation. Use the time off as an x day or Cover my midterm conferences represent just a few examples.

Practices at school also include the way teachers do their teaching process, classroom arrangements, how the principle conducts meetings among others. These might include the smell of the hallway, buzzers instead of bells, Snoopy Slips, rubberized asphalt playgrounds, Friday assemblies, pep rallies, parent visitation night, picnics, or Wednesday staff meetings. The list will never be complete and may reflect certain individual biases. But it does begin to paint a picture of school culture as expressed by the immediate effects of the climate (Witcher, 2005)

At the deepest level of level of culture, the underlying assumptions may include elements of other levels that have become taken for granted over time. For example, the administration and faculty decide on a change in policy that affects the daily schedule. Because the class period is shortened, teachers immediately recognize and feel the effects of the new policy. This noticeable change instantly becomes part of the artifacts level of culture, but as time passes the schedule develops into a daily routine. The shortened period gradually becomes a taken-for-granted practice (Steele et al, 2007). As the routine develops into a hidden part of the teacher's personal experience, it also becomes part of the underlying-assumptions level of culture. In this sense, the three levels are constantly fluctuating.

2.2.3 School Strategic Direction and Student Academic Performance

The schools strategic direction in terms of its objectives, goals, vision and missions significantly determine the nature of motivation among teachers and students themselves to perform better. In schools where you find pictures drawn and coded in seven basic areas: athletics and extracurricular activities, student life, academics, administration and authority, parents and

community, school mission, and problems and issues. These will always remind students of where they belong and read hard to perform better (Maxwell & Thomas, 2001).

Short-term and long term objectives in schools are very important in ensuring academic excellence in schools. One might consider how a list of short terms and long term objectives changes over the course of a year (Renchler, 2002). The lists themselves become more significant over the long term. A principal who understands the importance of maintaining a stable culture might consider saving lists from year to year. The school objectives may help address changes in artifacts, such as how routines, rituals, and traditions vary, or the subtle differences in school language.

The key long term goals are very important towards students performance if well embedded in the school culture. Historical relationships are important for understanding the deeper levels of school culture. Searching through old documents, minutes from past meetings, and yearbooks; looking at previously used curriculum; or talking to past employees offers the practitioner a window into the past (Maxwell & Ross, 2001). These activities illuminate not only the second level of school culture, but how values and beliefs are expressed over time with utmost objectivity. The school exists as a collection of experiences and shared objective meanings that shape its present condition. Schools have a life. Exploring past relationships and the important symbols of school culture, one begins to understand the values and beliefs embedded in a school's life history. By looking at those variations and differences and observing how artifacts change, the principal can better comprehend the nature of school culture (Maxwell & Thomas, 2001).

The underlying-assumptions level of culture focuses on how the values in the mission statement implicitly affect the direction of education. Those beliefs and values that are left out help us identify the assumptions that implicitly define what the school considers important. A mission statement that focuses on academic achievement may leave out social needs, cooperative learning, or a liberal education. The hidden assumption of this mission statement is that academic success has a higher priority than these other values (Lane, 2002). A school leader who aspires to be a culture builder should be concerned with what isn't. That is, she should be concerned as much about the values and beliefs that are not highlighted as those that explicitly guide the institution. This kind of concern addresses the underlying assumptions implicit in each administrative decision (Steele & Stephen, 2007).

2.3 Summary of the Literature Review

Brown (2004) stresses that a conducive environment is necessary to attain high student academic achievement. He summaries this as a recognizable environment where everyone is clearly learning; everyone expects to learn and expects everyone else to learn; classrooms and school halls contain numerous examples of high quality student work and achievement; there are multiple opportunities to learn in multiple ways, depending on how a person learns and at what pace; each student has productive relationships with many other students and with many teachers and adults in the community; great learners are celebrated and modeled; people work together on interesting projects in small and large groups; the school is abuzz with conversations about interesting and important matters; a language of inquiry and thoughtfulness tends to dominate; people listen to one another; everyone feels safe enough and free enough to take risks, to be

wrong, to make mistakes, or to try something new; widespread trust is evident; strangers are welcomed; diversity is capitalized on as a strength; and it just feels good to be there. In such environments, you feel known and respected and surrounded by people who will help you when you need them.

Although there is a growing body of literature on organizational culture, most of the studies have focused more on public rather than private institutions. Besides a lot more research on this topic has been conducted in the Western world where values and perspectives are far different to those in the developing world. The concept and importance of culture is still little felt with the private institutions let alone the private schools in Uganda yet as Deal (1985) puts it; school culture is a social energy that drives or fails to drive the organization. The relationship between school culture and students' performance has not been researched in depth especially in the Private schools where objectives of establishing schools differ. With the increasing competition for organizations' survival, the researcher feels the need to deeply analyze the relationship between school culture and students' performance to gauge how far impacted on the overall organizational performance.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter gives the methodology that was used to carry out the study. It presents the research design, study population, sample size, sampling methods, data collection methods and instruments, pretesting of instruments, procedure for data collection validity and reliability, data management and analysis, measurement of variables, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The study utilized the cross-sectional survey design. The rationale behind the use of this design was that it is the most appropriate in studies involving the collection of data from a sample of respondents representing the population of interest at one specific point in time as supported by Amin (2005) without follow-up. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in this study. Quantitative data was collected to explain phenomena in the form of numerical data and this was obtained from the questionnaire, while qualitative data was collected from the interviews, documents about the school and it was for a better understanding of the extent of the relationship between school culture and students performance. According to Amin (2005) a mix of the two approaches enables triangulation which makes it feasible for the researcher to make well informed findings and conclusions.

3.2 Study Population

As table 3.1 on page 31 shows, the study population was made of three schools which included: St Charles Lwanga Secondary school Kibiri, Aidan College and Mary Reparatrix Secondary school Bugonga. The students in the upper classes from S.4 to Senior 6 participated as these were most likely have spent more time in the schools and were considered to have good knowledge on school culture. In addition, full time staff was used in the study since most of them had spent more time at the school than those on a part time basis. The targeted population was at least 30 students from each of the three schools making 90 students and 8 teachers from each school giving a total of 24 teachers in total. The study involved 3 head teachers of the three schools selected. The total population of the study was 117. The head teachers helped to avail information to the researcher on how the mission, objectives and goals are stressed within the school, the way the norms and beliefs affect the way the students' ability to perform as expected.

3.3 Sample Size and Selection

In the sampling process, Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), explains that it's impossible to study the whole targeted population and therefore the researcher has to decide on a sampled population. The sample size of the study was 99 as presented below in the table and it was determined using Krejcie and Morgan, (1987) sample size determination table.

Table 3.1: Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

Category	Population(N)	Sample size(S)	Sampling Technique
Head teachers	3	3	Purposive
Teachers	24	23	Simple random
Students	90	73	Simple random
TOTAL	**117**	**99**	

Source: Head Teachers Offices

3.4 Sampling Methods

The study used purposive sampling to select head teachers (of each school). This sampling method allows a researcher to include subjects with specific needed information and this is supported by Kothiari (2004) and Amin (2005) who argued that purposive sampling enables a researcher to select only those respondents that possess the required information. Thus, school head teachers were selected using this design based on their experience and knowledge and the belief was that they had the information related to the culture of their respective schools.

Other categories of respondents (staff members and students) were selected using simple random sampling. Lottery method was used to select both upper secondary school students and staff members. With a lottery method, the name or number is written on the tag that identifies the element of the population to be sampled. Thus, a list of students and teachers was sought from the head teachers' office and their names written on a piece of papers, put in a bucket shaken and the first 23 and 73 were considered to participate in the study. Random sampling was used because it helps in avoiding bias in selection of respondents and ensures that each person has the same probability of being sampled.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from the questionnaire and interviews conducted with the students and teachers respectively. Secondary data was obtained from the school documents regarding their rules, policies, resolutions, and UNEB results as well as from journals, books and previous research done on organizational culture and performance and other documentation considered useful for research was used. The study used both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.5.1 Quantitative Methods

The questionnaire was the method used to generate quantitative data.

Questionnaire Method

Questionnaire method involved the use of self administered questionnaires to respondents in relation to school culture and student academic performance. In seeking for quantitative data, closed ended questionnaires in a scale (five likert) form were used. Questionnaire method was used because it helps in investigating the motives and feelings in Likert scaling as recommended by Creswell (1994). Besides, questionnaires are easy to fill, take little respondents' time to fill and are easy to analyze (Amin, 2005)

3.5.2 Qualitative Methods

To obtain qualitative data, interview and document review were applied.

Interview method

The interview method was used to obtain qualitative information on the influence of school culture and student academic performance that would not have been collected using

questionaires. This method took the option of face-to-face interviews that sought to provide the required data as specified above. Interview method was used because it provided an excellent opportunity to probe and explore questions as observed by Creswell (1994).

Document Review Method

A document review method was used in sourcing for secondary data in all relevant documents in relation to school culture and students academic performance. These were sourced from journals, text books and other relevant reliable sources.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments included questionnaires, interview guide and the documentary review checklist.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

The study used a five-likert scale questionnaire which was administered to staff members and students. One set of questionnaire was used to collect data from the two categories of respondents in respect to the themes of the study and each objective had at least 15 questions for purposes of intensive analysis of these objectives.

3.6.2 Interview Guide

Face to face interviews with the help of an interview guide were conducted among head teachers. The purpose of the interview guide was to collect general qualitative information from head teachers with regard to school culture and its impact on students' performance. Head teachers were believed to provide rich information with regard to school culture and how it influences students' academic performance. Interviews were used, because they are appropriate in

providing in-depth data, required to meet specific objectives, allows clarity in questioning and quite flexible compared to questionnaires as observed by Kvale (1996).

3.6.3 Document review checklist

Both primary and secondary data was used in the study. Primary data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews conducted with the students and teachers respectively. Secondary data was obtained from the school documents regarding their rules, policies, resolutions, and UNEB results as well as from journals, books and previous research done on organizational culture and performance and other documentation considered useful for research were used.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instruments

As a measure of quality control, the instruments were subjected to validity and reliability tests. Each of these is explained in the following sections.

3.7.1 Validity

Validity tests to determine the relevance of the questions on the constructs were carried out using a Content Validity Index (CVI). Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on research results. It is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represents the phenomenon understudy. Therefore validity looks at how accurately represented are the variables of the study (Mugenda, Mugenda 2003). The researcher's supervisors were used to determine the relevance of the instruments to the objectives of the study. They rated each item as either relevant or irrelevant. Items rated relevant by both supervisors divided by the total number of items in the questionnaire reveal the validity of the instruments.

3.7.2 Reliability

The study used Cronbach co-efficient alpha in testing the reliability of instruments. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), reliability refers to the measure of the degree to which research instruments yield consistent results after repeated trials**.** To ensure the consistency of the questionnaire, the researcher used Cronbachs alpha coefficient (α) to determine whether the instrument was reliable. Analysis of the piloted questionnaire gave a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Since this value was above 0.7, the instrument was considered strong and the researcher proceeded to data collection (Amin, 2005).

3.8 Procedure for Data Collection

In conducting this research, the student obtained a letter of introduction from Uganda Management Institute (UMI) to help with introductions to various respondents. After the construction of instruments the researcher took them for approval to the supervisor and there after they were taken for pretesting in selected few respondents. The researcher carried out a pilot run on a participating group in the study. Pretesting was done by picking 20 respondents from the study and giving them the same approved questionnaires. Pretesting helps to know whether respondents interpret phrases and questions as the researcher wants them, it also helps to obtain a general assessment of respondents' ability to perform required tasks (e.g. recall relevant information, estimate frequency of specific behaviors, etc.) and it also helps to obtain ideas for question wording in case rephrasing of the original statements is needed.

3.9 Data Management and Analysis

The collected data in the study yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. After respondents have answered questionnaires and interviews, raw data was cleaned, sorted and analyzed to produce the required statistics in the study.

3.9.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

In handling all the objectives of the study, the researcher used a computer package SPSS where data was entered, edited, cleaned and sorted. This program was used to obtain descriptive data in form of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations since it will be a five Likert questionnaire and this helped to give the general response towards each question in the likert scale through the mean values. In establishing the relationships among variables Pearson correlation was used to determine whether the existence of a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

3.9.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Data analysis of qualitative data from interviews in the three objectives of the study used content analysis where each piece of work answered in the interview guide was read through thoroughly to identify themes where it belongs and all relevant expressions in each objective was captured.

3.10 Measurement of Variables

The contribution of school culture and performance of students was measured on a five point Likert type scale (1- Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Not sure, 4- Agree and 5-Strongly agree). The choice of this measurement was that each point on the scale carries a numerical score used to measure the respondents' attitude and it is the most frequent used summated scale in the study

of social attitude. According to Mugenda (2003) and Amin (2005), the likert scale is able to measure perception, attitudes, values and behaviors of individuals towards a given phenomenon.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The ethical rules that were likely to limit the effectiveness of this research were taken into consideration. These included: access and acceptance, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality. Respondents were informed about the aim and nature of this research. This helped the researcher to get access and acceptance from the respondents. The informed consent was also solicited by explaining to the participants about the nature and the purpose of the research, benefits and participants' rights. Privacy and confidentially were also addressed. Here, the researcher protected the identity of individuals by keeping their names and that of their schools as anonymous as possible using the promise of confidentiality. Thus, pseudonym names (e.g. school A, B, C etc.) were used by changing the real names of the schools in order to ensure confidentiality of the information provided.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The study examined the influence of school culture on the academic performance of students in private secondary schools in Wakiso district. The study specifically looked at how school culture symbolic behaviors, school environment and school culture strategic direction influence the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the background information of respondents that participated in the study. The second section presents the empirical findings on school culture and students' academic performance. In this section, the analysis involves the descriptive results from questionnaire in form of mean to show the central tendency of responses in the likert scale questions including inferential statistics in form of correlations and regressions. Also, the study has qualitative results from interviews which are presented in quotations and narrative statements as per respondents' views in regard to each objective of the study.

4.2 Respondents' background information

The chapter begins with the response rate for the various categories of respondents. This is followed by the background information which is presented in form of Tables and graphs. Information on gender helped establish the distribution of respondents by sex while level of education helped to establish whether respondents would give views that are relevant and useful to the study. The period respondents had spent in school helped to share their experience on how

school culture has influenced academic performance of students in their respective schools and results are presented in the following Tables.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Category	Targeted respondents	No. actually involved	Response Rate
Questionnaire			
Teachers	23	20	87.0
Students	73	69	94.5
Sub Total	**96**	**89**	
Interviews			
Head teachers	3	3	100%
Subtotal			
Total	**99**	**92**	**92.9**

Source: Primary data

In the study as reflected in the table 4.1, a total number of 99 respondents were expected to participate in the study. However, the actual number which participated in the study was 92. This represents a highly satisfactory response rate of 92.9%. If the results of the study are to be considered satisfactory results Guttmacher Institute (2006) recommends a response rate of 60-70%. For this reason, the findings of this study can be relied upon for academic and non academic purposes.

Table 4.2: Respondents by Gender

	Frequency	**Percent**
Female	53	59.6
Male	36	40.4
Total	**89**	**100.0**

Source: primary Data

In the study, the gender of respondents was established and from the findings, it was revealed that 53(59.6%) of respondents that participated in the study were female whereas 36(40.4%) were male. This implies that majority in the participants in the schools that took part in the study were female respondents. In general, the study tried to be gender sensitive.

The study found out the level of education of respondents that participated in the study and the results are presented in table below.

Figure 4.1: Education level of the respondents
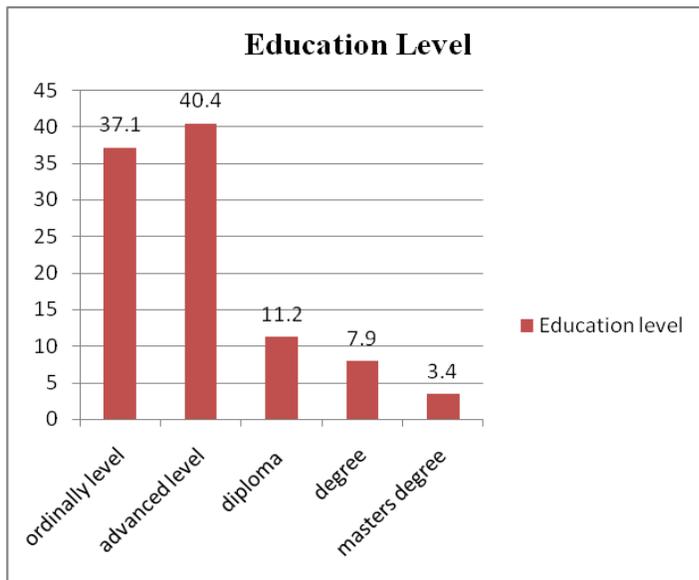
Source: Primary Data

In the education level, 40.4% of the respondents that participated in the study had advanced secondary level of education, 37.1% had Ordinary level of education, 11.2 had diploma level of education, 7.9% had bachelors' degree and 3.4% had degree level of education. Therefore majority, (77.8%) of respondents had secondary education since it is students who largely participated.

Table 4.3: Age of the respondents

	Frequency	**Percent**
Below 20years	30	33.7
20-24	22	24.7
25-30	5	5.6
31-35	14	15.7
36-40	7	7.9
41-45	4	4.5
46 and above	7	7.9
Total	**89**	**100.0**

Source: Primary Data

From Table 4.3, most of the participants (33.7%) were 20 years of age, 24.7% were aged between 20-24 years, 5.6% were aged between 25-30 years of age, where as 15.7% were aged between 31-35 years, 7.9% were aged between 36-40 years, 4.5 % were aged between 41-45 years and only 7.9% were aged above 46 years of age. From the findings, majority of the

respondents were below the age of 25 years. This is attributed to the fact that most of the participants were students.

The study established the period respondents had spent in their respective school and findings are presented below presents the findings.

Figure 4.2: Period worked or studied in this school
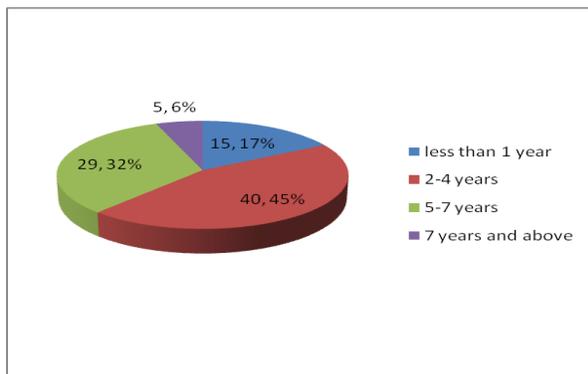
Source: Primary Data

In relation to the period students or teachers had spent in this school, 15.17% had been in the school for less than one year, 40.45% of respondents said they had been in the school for 2-4 years, 29.32% been there for 5-7 years while 5.6% had spent more than 7 years in the school. Thus, whereas the study also benefitted from getting information from respondents who had recently joined, the results show that majority had spent more than two years in the school therefore they were reliable informers on how school culture has influenced the academic performance of students in their school.

Figure 4.3: Region of origin of the respondents
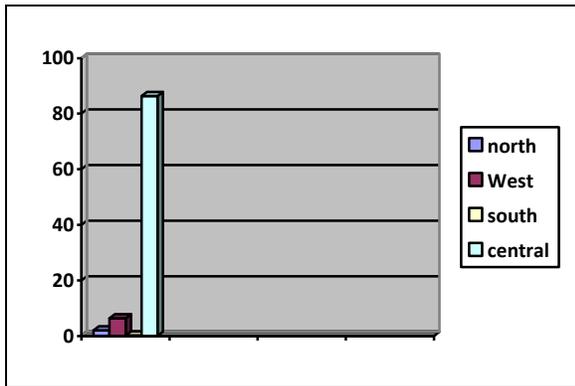
Source: Primary Data

Figure 4.3 indicates the distribution of the respondents by region. 86.3% of the respondents were from the central region, 11.5% from the West, 0.2% from the south and 2.0 % from the North. This indeed depicts the area of study since majority of the respondents were from the central region which was the study area.

Figure 4.4: Respondents' religious beliefs
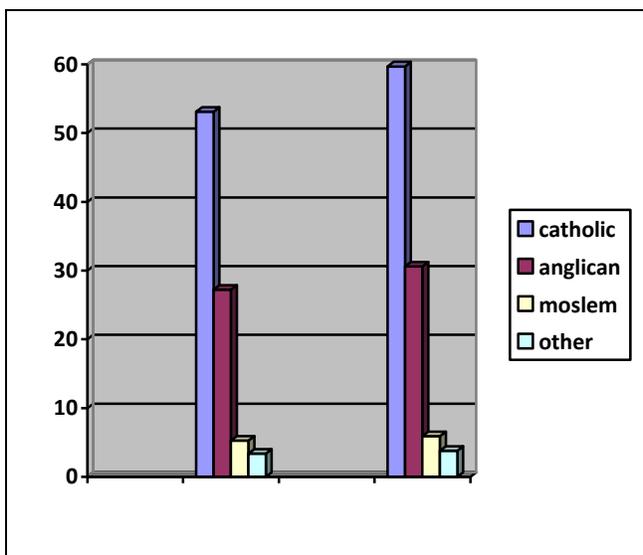
Source: Primary Data

The results in Figure 4.4 above show that more than fifty percent of the respondents were Roman Catholic's. On the other hand, nearly a third of the respondents were Anglicans while Muslims and respondents from other faiths constituted the lowest proportion

4.3 Empirical Findings on School Culture and Students' Academic Performance

In this study, the dependent variable was students' academic performance. It was hypothesized that the constructs of school culture would have a significant influence on students' academic performance in the schools that were sampled. Thus, following past studies students' performance, the researcher constructed a questionnaire that was used to elicit respondents' opinions to the various statements on the dependent variable. The responses to these items were then averaged to get an overall score for each respondent. For this variable, the scores for each respondent were ranging from 1.0 (the lowest) to 5.0 (being the highest score) for the items based on a likert scale. The same computation was done for each of the three independent variables. Consequently, the new composite scores created were correlated against the scores for the dependent variable in order to determine whether the responses on the independent variables had a bearing on those of the dependent variable which would imply that the three constructs of the independent variable (i.e. symbolic behaviors, school environment and school strategic direction) are linearly related with the responses on students' performance. In this section, the research findings are presented as per the objectives of the study.

4.3.1 Research question number one

The study examined how school culture symbolic behaviors influence the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. Respondents were asked to respond to the various items and questions in the questionnaire and interviews respectively and the results are presented in Table 4.4.

In the study, questionnaires results were computed to obtain means that shows the average or central tendency responses in each question of the Likert scale that were asked to respondents and results are presented below. The variable school symbolic behavior was looked at in regard to school ceremonies, school myths, school beliefs, school rituals. In questionnaires, the mean were computed in each question to show the mean responses that ranged between 1-5 where; 1-2.4= disagreed, 2.5-3.4=neutral, 3.5-5=agree. In interviews, using thematic content analysis, results were analyzed according to the themes of study. From interviews, expressions and narrations that were relevant to the objectives of the study were captured and presented in their respective themes. Descriptive results are presented first and then results from interviews.

Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics on the responses on School Symbolic behaviors

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
School ceremonies are held following our school culture ways	3.98	.661	89
Our school ceremonies uniquely identifies us	4.00	.767	89
The school has its own myth that are believed by all students	4.19	.603	89
The school myths are known by the school community	3.75	.785	89
The school has a set of values known to the school community	3.92	.848	89
Our school has its own norms well known by the school community	4.16	.797	89
The values and norms of the schools define the school's culture	3.67	.847	89
The school has its own beliefs that identifies it from other schools	3.71	.959	89
Our school has its own rituals that it performs once in a while	3.10	.799	89
All the rituals remind students that they belong to this community	3.32	.807	89

In Table 4.4, the results show that on average, respondents agreed that school ceremonies are held following the school culture ways (mean=3.98) and that their school ceremonies uniquely identifies them (mean=4.00). This implies that each school has its own way of conducting its ceremonies like academic gatherings, school assemblies, school church services, school parties,

school celebrations that uniquely identifies them from the rest of the schools around. This culture shapes them in a way that directs their academic activities in the school. Similar findings were obtained in the interviews. Specifically, qualitative results indicated that various schools have their own unique aspects that happen and are practiced in their school, those that are officially known to the school and those that known by students only and such practices uniquely identify such schools from others. One of the interviewees explained:

".... though not accepted in this school, students have a ritual or belief of teasing new students especially senior ones in various ways, that they are welcoming them to the school…which practice is done in various ways and away from teachers…"

The above excerpt shows that it is a belief among students that all new students must be teased in a certain way so as to welcome them to the school and this identifies them from others since in some schools it's harsh and in others it is not. Such kind of practice may scare students which may affect their concentration rate or even gain psychological bad experience that may affect them for the rest of their lives and this may affect their academic performance in the long run.

In the study, it was established that each school has its own myth that are believed by all students (mean=4.19) and that the school myths are known by the school community (mean=3.75). These school myths help students identify themselves from others as such myths determine much of how students are supposed to behave, conduct themselves and this determines how much effort they are likely to put in academic so as to effectively perform.

It was also reported that schools have sets of values known to the school community (mean=3.92). This value uniquely identifies them from other schools which largely determine their way of doing things and in the long run their performance. Such values range the way students study and all aspects surrounding their academics, the way students conduct their sports and other co-curricular activities as well as other activities at school that define their wellbeing.

The findings further revealed that on average, most of the respondents agreed that their schools have their own norms well known by the school community (mean=4.16) and that the values and norms of the schools define the schools culture (mean=3.67). This implies that each of the three schools that participated in this research has its own values and norms that uniquely identify it from other schools and this largely influences the way students study at school to have effective performance. In the same vein, respondents agreed that their schools have beliefs that identifies each school from other schools (mean=3.71). However, they were not sure of whether the schools have their own rituals that it performs once in a while (mean=3.10).

Having obtained the responses pertaining to symbolic behaviors of each school, the study sought to determine whether school symbolic behaviors have any significant influence on students' academic performance. The researcher used a Pearson correlation and simple regression to test the first hypothesis. Table 4.5 presents the results from a correlation analysis of the relationship between school symbolic behaviors and academic performance of students.

Table 4.5: Correlation Between School Symbolic Behaviors And Student Academic Performance

		Symbolic behaviors	Academic performance
Symbolic behaviors	Pearson Correlation	1	.728[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	89	89
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.728[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	89	89
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Results in table 4.5 above show a positive relationship between cultural symbolic behavior and students' performance as shown by the positive value of the correlation coefficient of .728 with a corresponding sig-value of .000 which is less than the level of significance 0.01. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.01 the influence is significant. This implies symbolic behaviors of the schools are important in enhancing student learning outcomes. Such behaviors include schools having myth that are believed by all students and are known by the school community. In addition, schools should always have a set of values and norms known to the school community among others

In addition to the results of the Pearson correlation, a simple linear regression analysis was run to determine the extent to which school symbolic behavior influence students' academic performance and the results are presented in 4.6.

Table 4.6: Results of the simple Regression model on the influence of school symbolic behaviors on students' academic performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.859	.089		9.632	.000
School symbolic behaviors	.229	.023	.728	9.908	.000
R2=.530					
Dependent Variable: Student academic performance					

The results of the regression analysis in the table above indicate the R-squared equal to 0.530 which shows that 53.0% variation in students' performance is explained by changes in school culture symbolic behavior. This implies that any changes in rules and regulations would lead to 53% change students' performance of students. The coefficient of School symbolic behaviors of 0.229 is positive and the sig-value is 0.000 which means that school culture symbolic behavior is significantly related with students performance (p<0.01). The results led to the upholding of the research hypothesis and the rejection of the null. This means that improvement in school culture

symbolic behaviors has a significant influence on improving students' performance. However, owing to the current commercialization of education sector, some of the core symbolic cultural behaviors that used to make schools appear unique from each other, have been largely eroded as one responding head teacher emphasizes in the following narrative excerpt:

"...the traditional school symbolic behaviors where schools valued assemblies, had their particular beliefs that made students and teachers worth mentioning their schools and public and feeling proud that they come from such a school are nearly extinct. This has been eroded by the current trend of schools being more business minded than minding on the culture legacy of such schools….."

This implies that the original aspects of where schools had a strong cultural root, where students and society felt proud by associating with schools that had symbolic behaviors that shaped students to academic excellence in various schools has been largely eroded by the new trend of commercialization of education. This implies that the school symbolic behaviors are no longer in place and practiced and this may affect students' performance in the long run.

It was further revealed that most schools no longer have those beliefs and norms that used to be remembered by every school that would allow them to concentrate and perform well. In fact one of the responding head teachers explained:

"…. It used to be a common belief that students from certain schools were so intelligent that immediately they are out of school they would get jobs …but of late, trends have changed and such beliefs have changed"

The belief that going through a particular school increases the likelihood of learners access to vast employment opportunities used to make parents strive hard to see that their children are admitted in such schools at whatever cost and in turn, this made school administrators and teachers of such schools to ensure that students perform highly such that their school keep such a name.

By and large, the inference derived from the quantitative and qualitative findings is that bringing about students' academic achievement highly depends on the school symbolic behaviors in terms of the vision, mission, openness, values, myths, rituals and norms for which the school is known. This therefore means that school heads need to understand the values and norms of the schools which they are leading. By having this knowledge at the back of their mind, school heads will be able to influence teachers, parents, students and the community to understand the school symbolic behaviors in order to improve the academic performance of their students.

4.3.2 Research question number two

The study examined how school environment influence the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. The variable school environment was measured in terms of school discipline, dress codes, teaching & learning styles and communication modes. Respondents were asked to respond to a series of statements that were formulated to elicit their perceptions and views with regard to their school environment. The results of the descriptive analysis are summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Descriptive statistics on the responses on School Environment

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Our school has a particular way it enforces discipline among its students and teachers	3.71	.723	89
Students and teachers used to the way disciplinary sessions are carried out in this school	4.01	.764	89
The school has its own way of dressing among students	4.12	.532	89
All the school community members love the school dress code tradition	4.35	.620	89
Teachers have a unique way of teaching that identifies us from others schools	1.23	.766	89
The learning and teaching styles are liked by all school stakeholders	4.19	.653	89
The school learning and teaching styles are unique	1.28	.841	89
The physical features in this school creates a good environment for learning	2.35	.569	89
We have our unique school colors that identify us from others.	4.19	.659	89
We are proud of our school colors	1.47	.580	89

According to the results in Table 4.7, each school has a particular way it enforces discipline among its students and teachers (mean=3.71) and that students and teachers are used to the way disciplinary sessions are carried out in their schools (mean=4.01). This allows everyone in the school to take school rules and regulations more seriously that largely contribute to the nature of academic performance likely to be achieved by students in the long run. On average, respondents also agreed that each of the three schools has its own way of dressing among students

(mean=4.12) and that all the school community members love the school dress code tradition (mean=4.35). This allows students to feel identified with the school and feel proud about it

In the analysis, it was also noted that on average, learning and teaching styles are liked by all school stakeholders (mean=4.19). Additionally, existing school colors and uniforms are always used by schools as a symbol of identification from others. In the analysis, it was also established that each school has unique school colors that identify it from others (mean=4.19). However the average response (mean=1.47) show that most of the respondents were not proud of their school colors.

The mode of teaching by each school and different learning styles as distinguished from each school significantly influences the academic performance of each school since students and teachers are likely appreciate the learning styles used. However, respondents denied the claim that teachers have a unique way of teaching that identifies them from others schools. This was given by a mean score of 1.23 which means that methods of teaching used by the teachers in the different schools is the same. In the same way, findings indicated that the learning environment as explained by the present physical features at each school hardly creates a good environment for learning (mean=2.35). In general, the physical features in terms of the nature of classroom in place the plantations at school among others largely determine the comfort with which students are likely to study with in their respective schools and this determines how much they are likely to perform in their academics.

The findings in this section have by and large shown that with the exception of some few statements where respondents' average scores were low; there is strong indication from the table to tentatively conclude that the school environment was generally perceived to be good. But the question that begs for an answer is: what is the influence of the school environment factors on

the academic performance of students? In this study it was hypothesized that if the perceptions of the students and teachers with regard to the school environment are favorable, the responses on academic performance would also be good. This hypothesis was verified using a Pearson correlation coefficient and simple linear regression in tables 4.9 and 4.9 respectively.

Table 4.8: Correlation between School environment and academic performance of students

		School environment	performance
School Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	.688**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	89	89
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.688**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	89	89
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Results in the Table 4.8 above show a positive relationship between school environment and students performance. This indicated by the value of the correlation coefficient equal to 0.688 implying a positive nature of the relationship that exists between the two variables. The sig-value of this relationship was 0.000. Since this value is less than 0.01, the outcome of the analysis strongly confirm the existence of a significantly positive relationship between the school environment and students' academic achievement. This implies that in a situation where schools define in clear terms their discipline aspects, their dress codes are well known to everyone, teaching & learning styles well practiced and appreciated by all and all communication modes

well-articulated by the institution, then there is a more likelihood that performance will greatly improve.

A simple linear regression analysis was also run to determine the magnitude at which the school environment affects students' performance. The results are presented in the table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Results of the simple regression on the influence of school environment on academic performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.774	.108		7.169	.000
School environment	.245	.028	.688	8.848	.000
R2=.474					
Dependent Variable: Student academic performance					

The results of the regression analysis in Table 4.9 show the value of R-squared equal to 0.474 which implies that 47.4% of the overall variance in students' performance is explained by school culture environment. Like in the results of the Pearson correlation, the coefficient of school environment was positive and significant (β =.245, p<0.01) which means that other factors remaining constant, the school environment has a significant influence on student academic performance. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the research

hypothesis which stated that; School environment has a significant influence on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. The implication of this finding is that improvement in school environment significantly improves students' academic performance in the school. This assertion renders credence with some of the qualitative findings obtained from head teachers. While emphasizing the importance of a conducive school environment in the promotion of academic excellence one head teacher explained:

".....school environment is very important in determining students' academic performance. You find some schools are too squeezed that students do not have even where to read from when not in class…."

Therefore in a school environment where there is no space for students to use when reading, imply that students may feel uncomfortable to read and understand the whole content of what they are taught in class and this largely affects the performance of students.

Communication criteria to both teachers and students are also a vital aspect of the school environment. When the channels of communications are poor, discontentment increases among the school staff and students which may result into rebellion among those who feel aggrieved. Consequently employee turnover increases, commitment to the school falls and we a likely to see massive reduction in student numbers. On this aspect, one respondent had this to say:

"……some of the leaders in our school have poor communication …, some are too harsh on students and teachers and this creates a situation of resentment among students that affects their academic performance…"

This shows that poor communication can adversely affect school culture that may be very important in ensuring students perform better. It should be noted that poor communication from the top leadership may affect the performance of students since it disorganizes teachers' concentration to deliver as required.

In a nutshell, when the complex patterns of beliefs, values, attitudes, expectations, ideas behaviors and communication channels are inappropriate, the school culture will be affected. Indeed, previous empirical studies have shown that when leaders focus on the improvement of the learning environment, teacher morale and student achievement increase. This therefore implies that heads of schools should always care and focus on the specific aspects of the dimensions of school environment that affect the culture of the school in order promote student achievement.

4.3.3 Research question number three

The study examined how the school culture strategic direction influence the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. Respondents were involved in answering questionnaires and interviews. The variable strategic direction was looked at in relation to mission, vision, objectives, and goals. Results from questionnaires were obtained and are triangulated with results from interviews and findings are presented below.

Table 4.10: Descriptive statistics on the responses on strategic direction

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
The school has its mission that guides its cultural practices	4.05	.469	89
The school mission is known by all students and it guides them to performance	1.50	.940	89
The school mission is well displayed as a school culture for all to view	1.85	.693	89
The school has a vision that guides its activities	1.19	.503	89
The vision is known to all students	1.38	.631	89
The school has a set of objectives that guide the activities of the school	1.51	.600	89
Our school objectives are known to all	2.13	.516	89
The school goals are known to all people in the school	1.66	.540	89
The goals are known to all stakeholders in the school	1.23	.537	89
School objectives are well displayed for all to see	2.80	.638	89

In relation to the scores on the items relating to strategic direction, respondents on average agreed (mean=4.05) that their schools have missions that guide their cultural practices it is well displayed as a school culture for all to view (mean=3.85). Albeit this school mission guides is expected to guide most of the school activities (mean=4.19), the school mission was not known (mean=1.50) by all students. This implies that despite the existence a well displayed school mission the results suggest that most of the students and other stakeholders are reluctant to know what is contained in their schools' mission.

As to whether schools have a set of objectives that guides the activities of the school, the responses (mean=1.51) appear to indicate the absence / inadequate circulation or display of such objectives and even where they exist, these objectives are not well displayed for all to see (mean=2.80). This is why they are known to a few (mean=2.13). This implies that most people may not know that the school has a particular set of objectives that guide them and affects the focus students may have towards their performance. In addition to the absence of objectives that are expected to guide school activities, the study further established that school goals are not only unknown to all people within the school (mean=1.66) but also other stakeholders (mean=1.23). This implies that despite the fact that there are goals for the school they are not known by most of the people and outside the school and this may lead to lack of focus in the long run that affects students' performance in the long run. The results from the questionnaire were not any different from those obtained in the interview especially with regard to display of most of the strategic direction aspects in most schools which makes most of them unknown to the school community as one respondent emphasized:

"...most of the aspects that define the direction of the school are not well displayed in most schools… usually, the school vision, mission or goals are hidden the head teachers' offices … as a result, many teachers and students hardly know whether school has such aspects…."

This therefore imply that there is poor display of such strategic direction components like mission, vision, goals, objectives among others contributes to most stakeholders not knowing what actually the school is premised on and this largely affects teachers ways of conceptualizing and always reminding themselves of what the school stands for.

Having obtained the responses from the questionnaire pertaining to the strategic direction of the schools, it was important to establish whether the ratings on this independent variable had any association with the responses on students' academic performance. Like in the previous analyses, the third hypothesis was also tested using a Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis as given in Tables 4.11 and 4.12.

Table 4.11: Correlation between school strategic direction and the academic performance of students

		Strategic direction	Performance
Strategic direction	Pearson Correlation	1	.691[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	89	89
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.691[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	89	89
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

As indicated in the table above there is a positive significant relationship between school culture strategic directions and academic performance of students. The obtained correlation co-efficiency of .691 with a significance value of .000, explains the positive nature of relationship that exists between the two variables. This implies that in situations where the school has a mission, vision, objectives and goals that are well articulated, well displayed and well put then there is likely to influence the academic performance of students in the long run.

Table 4.12: Results of the simple regression on the influence of the school Strategic direction on academic performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.801	.104		7.667	.000
Strategic direction	.260	.029	.691	8.912	.000
R2=.477					
Dependent Variable: Academic performance					

In regression analysis as indicated in the table above indicate the value of R^2=0.477 indicates that 47.7 % of the variation in students' performance is explained by changes in school culture strategic direction. This implies that any changes in school culture strategic direction would lead to 44.7% chance change in the students' performance. The results also show that school strategic direction has a significant influence on students' academic performance (β=0.260, p<0.01). This supports hypothesis three which stated that "school culture strategic direction significantly influences the academic performance of students in private secondary schools in Wakiso district". This implies that improvement in the way school mission, vision, objectives and goals are put significantly influence school performance.

An analysis of the participant's viewpoints in both questionnaires and interviews reveals that the strategic direction of the school should be well displayed and made available to the school community as a whole. In schools where the strategic direction are well articulated and made accessible to all, it is likely that stakeholders in such a school are likely to be more focused and therefore, likely to achieve the school's objectives. All this translates into improved school performance. The strategic direction sets standards and helps to galvanize the efforts of all staff towards a common goal. Therefore, where it is well articulated and translated in all the school activities, the school must achieve its objectives including academic excellence of its students.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study examined the influence of school culture on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. This chapter deals with a summary, discussion of the empirical findings obtained in the previous chapter, draws conclusions and gives recommendations in accordance with the study findings.

5.2 Summary of the Study Findings

The broad aim of this research was to find out the influence of school culture on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. The study specifically looked at how school culture symbolic behaviors, school environment and school culture strategic direction influence the academic performance of students in private secondary schools in Wakiso district. Using a cross-sectional design in which quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed in collecting data pertaining to the study objectives from students, teachers and head teachers, the study was able to come up with the following findings.

5.2.1 Objective one: the first objective aimed at finding out the influence of the school symbolic behaviors on student academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso District. In the results of the statistical analysis, the results of the Pearson correlation revealed a positively significant relationship between school culture symbolic behaviors and academic performance of

students (r=0.728, p=0.000) with a regression R^2 of .530. therefore in a school where School ceremonies are held in a unique way that make students appreciate the school, school myths that uniquely identify students' behaviors, beliefs that portray the actual identity of the school and rituals that define the way of doing school activities significantly influence students performance.

5.2.2 Objective two: In the second objective, the researcher was interested in determining the influence of the school environment on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. The results were in line with the research hypothesis in which the results revealed a positive and significant relationship between school culture environmental factors and students academic performance (r=.688, p=0.000) and regression R^2 of .474. Therefore in a situation where schools define very well their discipline aspects, their dress codes are well known to everyone, teaching & learning styles well practiced and appreciated by all and all communication modes well articulated by the institution, then there is a more likelihood that performance will greatly improve.

5.2.3 Objective three: In objective three, the study sought to examine the influence of the school strategic direction on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. Consequently, the outcome of the statistical analysis revealed a positive and significant relationship between school culture strategic relationship and performance of students (r=0.691, p=0.000) and regression R^2 of .477. Therefore in situations where the school has a mission, vision, objectives and goals that are well articulated, well displayed and well put then there is likely to influence the academic performance of students in the long run.

5.3 Discussion of Study Findings

The findings are discussed according to the objectives of the study and details are presented below.

5.3.1 Research question number one

There is a positive significant relationship between and cultural symbolic behavior and students' performance. In schools where school ceremonies are held in a unique way that make students appreciate the school, school myths that uniquely identify students' behaviors, beliefs that portray the actual identity of the school and rituals that define the way of doing school activities significantly influence students' performance. This finding is in line with Brown, (2006) who assert that symbolic behavior perspective proposes that individuals are faced with uncertainty when introduced to an organization. This uncertainty creates a reliance on symbolic messages so individuals can make sense of their environment. In order to reduce uncertainty, organizations create sets of standardized meanings depicted by symbols. As symbolic messages are interpreted by individuals, they react collectively within the organizational culture. As organizational cultures are learned, shared, and transmitted a collective social reality emerges (Harris & Nelson, 2008).

The regression results explain that there is 53.0% chance that students' performance is explained when there are changes in school culture symbolic behavior. This implies that any changes in rules and regulations would lead to 53% change students performance of students. Therefore improvement in school culture symbolic behaviors is significantly and positively associated with

improved students' performance. This is in line with Colvin, (2006) who assert that organizational cultures are created and maintained by symbolic behavior, giving managers an opportunity to create, articulate, and sustain the organization's values as individuals focus on shared values. The symbolic nature of shared values can also reduce ambiguity and tension within an organization.

There are beliefs and norms that are practiced by students. A belief among students that all new students must be teased in a certain way so as to welcome them to the school and this identifies them from others since in some schools it is harsh and in others it is not. Such kind of practice may scare students which may affect their concentration rate or even gain psychological bad experience that may affect them for the rest of their lives and this may affect their academic performance in the long run. This finding relates to Joan & Shirley, (2003) who assert that values and beliefs level, according to Schein, defines the basic organizational character of the school. Through shared values and beliefs, members of the organization develop a sense of direction that guides their day-to-day behavior. Values are enacted as part of the daily school routine. If the school has designated respect as an important value, people are expected to treat others with consideration and concern. Likewise, teachers, principals, and other staff express certain beliefs about the value of education. Practitioners bring with them a particular set of principles that reflect the very nature of education at the school. For example, a teacher may believe in the value of experiential learning. This belief then, becomes an expression of culture as reflected in her actions.

The key and original aspect of where schools had a strong cultural root, where students and society felt proud by associating with schools that had symbolic behaviors that shaped students to academic excellence in various schools has been largely eroded by the new trend of commercialization of education. This implies that the school symbolic behaviors are no longer in place and practiced and this may affect students' performance in the long run. This relates to Schein, (2004) who assert that values and beliefs are not always explicit. They are often a reflection of experience. The verbal and written symbols encode what is valued and believed, and so do the hidden or implicit dimensions of our language. For example a sign in a school's front office says, a clean desk is a sign of a sick mind. The sign is not intended to be taken literally. Not all people who have clean desks are mentally ill; rather, the sign speaks to a cultural norm. It may imply that a more relaxed environment is valued, or it may speak to the busy nature of the office. The sign's intended message is implicit.

Beliefs where the community and other people belief that students are have high chances of success after going through such schools with strong symbolic behaviors, then parents would strive hard to see that their children go through such schools and this influenced students and teachers to ensure that students perform highly such that their school keep such a name. This is related to as Bowers & David (2005) assert at the deepest, least tangible level of organizational culture are underlying assumptions the symbols, values, and beliefs that are not clearly recognizable but continue to shape the behavior of the organization's members. Much the same way we are unaware of gravity until we fall, some parts of culture are hidden until they are made explicit. The aspects of culture are hidden in the unconscious dimensions of school life and taken

for granted by those who work there. Cultural patterns are experienced by the individual as part of a worldview that is transparent or taken for granted.

5.3.2 Research question number two

The findings revealed a positive relationship between school environment and students performance. Therefore in a situation where schools define very well their discipline aspects, their dress codes are well known to everyone, teaching & learning styles well practiced and appreciated by all and all communication modes well articulated by the institution, then there is a more likelihood that performance will greatly improve. This finding is in line with Battistich & Hom (2007) who assert that when students find their school environment to be supportive and caring, they are less likely to become involved in substance abuse, violence, and other problem behaviors. They are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward themselves and prosodies attitudes and behaviors toward others. Much of the available research shows that supportive schools foster these positive outcomes by promoting students' sense of connectedness, belongingness, or community during the school day. Connectedness, belongingness, and community all refer to students' sense of being in close, respectful relationships with peers and adults at school.

The regression analysis predicts 47.4% chance change in performance of students if school environment is improved. This means that improvement in school environment significantly influence the nature of students performance in the school. This finding is related to Hoy, Kottkamp & Rafferty, (2003) who explain that students' academic success is greatly influenced by the type of school environment they attend. School factors include school structure, school composition and school climate. The school that one attends is the institutional environment that

sets the parameters of a students' learning experience. School environment also looks at teaching skills, climate, socioeconomic conditions, and student achievement. Depending on the environment, schools can either open or close the doors that lead to academic performance.

School environment is very important towards students' performance. In a school environment where there is no space for students to use when reading, imply that students may feel not comfortable to read and gist up the whole content of what they are taught in class and this largely affects the performance of students in various ways. This is related to Crosnoe et al., (2004) who explain that school environment, direct school-level measures such as the building and physical environment, and the school social and psychological environments have been used often. A cordial relationship between the head teacher and learners creates an environment conducive to learning as discussions are encouraged and learners are listened to. The head teacher works together with students on how to succeed in life and in academic work. In such a school, every member is useful in decision making process and students are usually disciplined and possess positive academic attitudes. The head teacher has a formal relationship with several other people or groups of people both inside and outside the school system. Therefore, the image of the school is seen through the administrative capabilities of the head teacher.

Poor communication that exists in some school may responsible for eroded school culture that may be very important in ensuring students perform better. It should be noted that poor communication from leadership may affect the performance of students since it disorganizes teachers' concentration to deliver as required. This is related to According to Crosnoe *et al.* (2004), who explain that school climate is closely linked to the interpersonal relations between

students and teachers with eased communication. School climate is the general atmosphere of school. Trust between students and teachers increases if the school encourages teamwork.

5.3.3 Research question number three

The outcome of the analysis showed a positive and significant relationship between school culture strategic directions and academic performance of students. In situations where the school has a mission, vision, objectives and goals that are well articulated, well displayed and well put then there is likely to influence the academic performance of students in the long run. This is in line with Maxwell & Thomas, (2001)

The regression analysis predicts that 47.7 % of improvement in students performance if school culture strategic direction is improved. This implies that any changes in school culture strategic direction would lead to 44.7% chance change in the students' performance. This finding is in line with Renchler, (2002) who explain that short-term and long term objectives in schools are very important in ensuring academic excellence in schools. One might consider how a list of short terms and long term objectives changes over the course of a year. The lists themselves become more significant over the long term. A principal who understands the importance of maintaining a stable culture might consider saving lists from year to year. The school objectives may help address changes in artifacts, such as how routines, rituals, and traditions vary, or the subtle differences in school language.

The manner in which the school direction are visibly located and displayed significantly influence how much stakeholders are likely to know about the school strategic direction. In this

study, it was revealed that there is poor display of such strategic direction components like mission, vision, goals, objectives among others contributes to most stakeholders not knowing what actually the school is premised on and this largely affects teachers ways of conceptualizing and always reminding themselves of what the school stands for. This largely affects students' performance since teachers largely influence students' performance. This finding relates to Steele & Stephen, (2007) who assert that the underlying-assumptions level of culture focuses on how the values in the mission statement implicitly affect the direction of education. A mission statement that focuses on academic achievement may leave out social needs, cooperative learning, or a liberal education. The hidden assumption of the mission statement is that academic success has a higher priority than these other values. A school leader who aspires to be a culture builder should be concerned with what isn't. That is, she should be concerned as much about the values and beliefs that are not highlighted as those that explicitly guide the institution. This kind of concern addresses the underlying assumptions implicit in each administrative decision.

5.4 Conclusions

The study analyzed the influence of school culture on students' academic performance. On the basis of the study findings, several conclusions were made;

5.4.1 Influence of the school symbolic behaviors on student academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district

School symbolic behaviors have a significant influence on the academic performance of students. Specifically, evidence derived from the analysis showed that in cases were symbolic behaviors were perceived as being appropriate, there was also a higher likelihood that respondents would have a positive rating of students' academic performance.

In light of the above, it is concluded that School symbolic behaviors are very important in explaining the variations in students' academic performance. In other words, in schools where a set of values, norms, beliefs and rituals are known to the school community, students' academic performance improves significantly.

5.4.2 Influence of the school environment on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district

With regard to the second objective, the outcomes of the statistical analysis led the researcher to conclude that the school environment has a positive and significant influence on the academic performance of students in the area of study. In other words, when the school environment improves, academic performance follows suit.

5.4.3 Influence of the school strategic direction on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district

Although the study discovered that many of the school stakeholders were not aware of the strategic direction of their respective schools (such as school mission, vision, objectives and goals), the outcome of the statistical analysis led to a conclusion that the school strategic direction is positively and linearly associated with the performance of private secondary schools in Wakiso District. The results showed that individuals who knew and understood the strategic direction of their schools favorably perceived the academic performance of the students than those who were not aware of the existence of the strategic direction.

Therefore, it is concluded that schools strategic direction in terms of having a mission, vision, presence of a set of objectives that guide the activities of the school to mention but a few are all important in improving students' academic outcomes.

5.5 Recommendations to the study

Based on the study findings the following recommendations were made;

The findings of this study are useful for educational policy makers in Uganda especially the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES). Specifically, it is recommended that as the MoES plans interventions to improve students' academic performance, emphasis should also be put on helping school work towards the improvement of school culture especially in terms of schools strategic direction, symbolic behaviors and school environment.

Since symbolic behaviors are significantly important in influencing students' academic performance, school heads need to understand the values, practices, rituals, myths and norms of the schools which they are leading. By having this knowledge, school heads will be able to influence teachers, parents, students and the community to understand the school symbolic behaviors and they will all work towards a common goal of improving students' academic outcomes.

The study also showed that school environment as an aspect of school culture influences students' academic performance. It therefore follows that, heads of schools should always care and focus on the specific aspects of the dimensions of school environment that affect the culture of the school in order promote student achievement. These may involve improving communication channels, enforcing discipline among its students and teachers among others

Lastly, the strategic direction of each school should be well displayed and made available to the school community as a whole. This is because in schools where the strategic direction is well articulated and made accessible to all, such schools are more focused and achieve the school's objectives including academic excellence of its students.

5.6 Areas of Further Research

The study sought to explore the influence of school culture on the academic performance of students in private secondary schools in Wakiso district. Although the study revealed vital findings, further research should focus on;

- The influence of other organizational factors on the academic performance of students. Such areas could be community factors, changes in technology, the influence of the media as well as commercialization of the Education sector.

- The influence of teacher motivation as an independent variable towards students' performance. In the course of the study it was realized that schools use different forms of motivating their staff particularly the teachers and this greatly impacts on the students' performance.

- The influence of Government policy on performance of secondary schools in Uganda.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

One of the most important limitations of this study is that while the findings of this study provide interesting outcomes, the researcher acknowledges and emphasizes that, the study is not exhaustive and cannot therefore claim full coverage all aspects of school culture apart from the three constructs considered in this research. This means that, what has been done is a "tip of an iceberg" to emphasize the fact that there is a lot more to be done regarding other constructs of school culture and how they influence students' academic achievement. Secondly, data for this research was restricted to a selected number of private secondary schools in Wakiso District. Thus, conclusions should be interpreted as applying to private secondary schools and specifically

to three schools. This means that the results of this study fall short of being generalizable to a vast population. Because of the relatively small sample, the hypotheses need to be tested further and the tendencies in order to make appropriate generalization. Therefore, to enhance external validity of the findings reported in this study, future research efforts should obtain a representative sample from private schools in different districts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire for Students and Teachers

Questionnaire Number…………………

Dear respondent,

I am Rita Mutaawe, a student at Uganda Management Institute. I am requesting you to fill this questionnaire, which is aimed at collecting data on the influence of school culture on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. You have been selected to be one of our respondents in this study. The information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and shall not be used for any other purpose except for academic purposes. The study will ensure your anonymity and confidentiality. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Rita Nakanwagi Mutaawe

SECTION A

Please tick an option you consider to be the most appropriate

Your Gender

1. Male

2. Female

Education level.

1. Ordinary level

2. Advanced level

3. Diploma

4. Degree

5. Masters degree

6. Others specify………………………

Age of respondent.

1. Below 20 years

2. 20-25

3. 26-30

4. 31-35

5. 36-40

6. 41-45

7. 46-above

Period worked or studied in this school.

1. Less than 1 year

2. 2-4 years

3. 5-7 years

4. 7 years and above

Region of origin

1. West

2. Central

3. North

4. South

Your Religious belief

1. Catholic

2. Anglican

3. Moslem

4. Others specify…………….

For the following questions please tick the number of your choice

Key

1. **Strongly Disagree**

2. **Disagree**

3. **Not Sure**

4. **Agree**

5. **Strongly Agree**

SECTION B: School environment

On a scale of 1-5 please respond to the following options about the school environment

1.	Our school has a particular way it enforces discipline among its students and teachers	1	2	3	4	5
2	Students and teachers used to the way disciplinary sessions are carried out in this school	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The school has its own way of dressing among students	1	2	3	4	5
4.	All the school community members love the school dress code	1	2	3	4	5

	tradition					
5.	Teachers have a unique particular way of teaching that identifies us from others schools	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6.	The learning and teaching styles are liked by all school stakeholders	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7.	Our school learning and teaching style are unique	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8.	The physical features in this school creates a good environment for learning	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
9.	We have our unique school colors that identify us from others.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
10.	We are proud of our school colors					

SECTION C: Culture symbolic behaviors

In this section, you are requested to give your opinion on each of the following items relating to

Culture symbolic behaviors exhibited in your school

1	School ceremonies are held following our school culture ways	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2.	Our school ceremonies uniquely identifies us	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3.	The school has its own myth that are believed by all students	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4.	The school myth are known by the school community	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5.	The school has a set of values known to the school community	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6.	Our school has its own norms well known by the school community	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7.	The values and norms of the schools define the schools culture	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8.	The school has its own beliefs that identifies it from other schools	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

9.	Our school has its own rituals that it performs once in a while	1	2	3	4	5
10.	All the rituals remind students that they belong to this community	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION D

In this section, I am interested in obtaining with regard to the items relating to School Strategic Direction in your school

1.	The school has its mission that guides its cultural practices	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The school mission is known by all students and it guides them to performance	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The school mission is well displayed as a school culture for all to view	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The school has a vision that guides its activities	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The vision is known to all students	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The school has a set of objectives that guides the activities of the school	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Our school objectives are known to all	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The school goals are known to all people in the school	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The goals is known to all stakeholders in the school	1	2	3	4	5
10.	School objectives are well displayed for all to see	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E: Student's Academic performance

Each of the following statements describes an indicator of academic performance, Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements.

1	Excellent grades in UNEB exams are obtained every year	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2.	We get a high number of excellent performers in UNEB exams in this school	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3.	At least all students get principle passes in UNEB exams	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4.	All students are able to effectively read and write English on their own	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5.	All students perform highly in all subjects	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6.	Students can interpret all English texts in exams excellently	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7.	Students can easily recall all that was taught in class	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8.	Students can easily read and interpret any academic text in exams and during studying	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Appendix II: Interview Guide for Head Teachers

Dear respondent,

I'm Rita Mutaawe am requesting you to participate in this interview, which is aimed at collecting data on the influence of school culture on the academic performance of students in Private secondary schools in Wakiso district. You have been selected to be one of our respondents in this study. The information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and shall not be used for any other purpose except for academic purposes. The study will ensure your anonymity and confidentiality. Thank you very much for your cooperation

What are some of the culture practices that are specific to your school?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

How do these cultural practices influence the performance of students in this institution?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

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What are some of the key cultural symbolic behaviors (in regard to School myths, values, norms, beliefs Rituals) practiced in this school?

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How have these practices influenced the performance of students in your school?

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In your own opinion how does the practice of school objectives, goals, mission and vision by all

stake influence the performance of students.……………………………………………

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