

**SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY AND STUDENTS' ATTENDANCE IN SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN KASESE DISTRICT, UGANDA**

**By**

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**09/HD/39/MEPPM**

**A RESEARCH DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE  
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MANAGEMENT OF KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY**

**DECEMBER, 2011**

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**DECLARATION**

I, **Thembo Kalhungulha Nathan**, declare that this research dissertation is my original work and has never been submitted for academic award in any university or institution of higher learning.

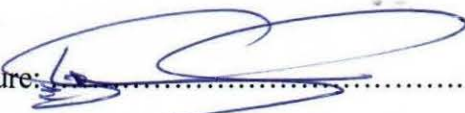
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### APPROVAL


I certify that this research dissertation entitled, "School Accessibility and Students' Attendance in Secondary Schools in Kasese district" was conducted by **Thembo Kalhungulha Nathan** under my supervision and is now ready for submission for examination.

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## **DEDICATION**

I humbly dedicate this research dissertation to my wife Jackline Kalhungulha (Mrs) for the financial and moral support; my children Mumbere Watson, Muhindo Nancy Evasta and Bwambale Walton, for missing my parental love and care. The patience they exhibited during the strenuous period of my study gave me strength and courage to move forward and complete this study programme.

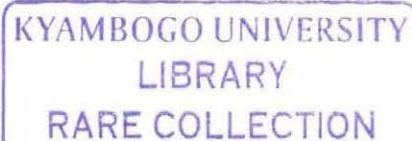
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## ABSTRACT

The study was about School Accessibility and Students' attendance in Secondary Schools in Kasese district. This study was prompted by the fact that whereas the introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme in Uganda had increased access to secondary education, students' absenteeism and late arrival was still apparent and it was indeed a serious problem resulting into poor students' attendance in secondary schools. The study was therefore to find out whether there was a significant relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district. It specifically examined the state of secondary school accessibility, the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival, the relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance, the measures put in place by school administrators to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools and to recommend strategies that could be adopted to overcome the problem of students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher employed a cross-sectional survey design of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from 19 secondary schools where semi-structured questionnaires were administered to a sample of 403 respondents comprised of 328 students, 59 teachers and 16 headteachers both male and female.

The study established that students had difficulties in accessing secondary schools they travelled long distances to reach schools. The majority of them used poor means of transport particularly footing. These factors resulted into students' absenteeism and late arrival at school hence poor attendance. The study further found out that was a negative correlation between the distances travelled by students from their homes to school and the total number of students that attended

school per day. According to these findings, the researcher concluded that the state of secondary school accessibility was poor in Kasese district.

## ACRONYMS

EFA	Education for All
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sport
UDHS	Uganda Demographic Health Survey
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPPET	Uganda Post Primary Education and Training
USE	Universal Secondary Education

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter covered background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, scope of the study, significance of the study and conceptual framework.

#### 1.1 Background

Initiatives introduced by Commonwealth governments in the last twenty years, to improve education, have brought about increased access to educational services in member countries such as Uganda. Among the initiatives are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which include universal education at primary and secondary levels aimed at enhancing equal access to, and eliminating gender disparity in, primary and secondary education (UNESCO 2002). The free and universal education at both primary and post primary levels in Uganda, has tremendously enhanced access to education opportunities. However, as noted by Owolabi (2006), the access of children to formal education depends on accessibility. How accessible the school is to a child depends on, among other things, where the school is located – school accessibility. The place where the school is located, relative to the homes where children live, has far reaching effects on participation rate of children, including their school attendance.

School accessibility is the convenience with which students attend schools. It further refers to how easy it is for them to get to their respective schools. This is in respect to the distance travelled, time taken and the means of transport they use to get to school. School accessibility affects participation (attendance) meaning that when schools are not available in close vicinity, reaching them may impose time and financial costs (Sarah Tumwebaze, 2011).

Regular attendance at school is essential to assist students to maximize their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. Research is increasingly showing that attendance at all ages is incredibly important and is directly correlated to student success and graduation rates. According to a study conducted by Hedy Chang and Mariajose Romero as cited in Roderick, M. et al (1997) they found that when students are chronically absent during secondary level (both excused and unexcused absences) that these students perform lower academically. This is true “regardless of gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.”

Focusing on increasing and improving access to education, the Government of Uganda introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. Ten years later, the Government launched the Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme in 2007. As indicated in the New Vision of August 18th 2010, the cardinal aim of USE was to ensure that achievements attained under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) were consolidated and sustained. This was to be achieved by providing an opportunity for continuity and further enhancement of access to secondary education especially to the majority of Ugandan children who were

failing to access secondary education (New Vision August 18, 2010). The introduction of USE policy shows Government's commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on universal secondary schooling and eliminating gender parity in both primary and post-primary education and training (MoES 2007).

Since the inception of the USE programme in 2007, enrolment in secondary schools has steadily increased. The New Vision of August 16, 2010 indicated that the number of students who were getting free secondary education in 2010, under the USE programme had risen to about 73% in the previous four years. This implies that the introduction of USE in Uganda has increased access to secondary education. However, despite this increment in enrolment and besides government's commitment on universal completion of secondary schooling, students' attendance is still poor in some parts of the country, more particularly in Kasese district. This is a serious problem which, if not addressed, may jeopardise the aims of USE in Uganda. This problem is exhibited through apparent students' absenteeism, late arrival at school and high dropout rates. According to the USE/UPPET Headcount Report of 2009, about 5.8% of the students who had enrolled for the USE programme were proven absentees (MoES 2009). The survey carried out by stakeholders from MoES, in some districts of Uganda, revealed that absenteeism of pupils was one of the most challenges in education (Daily Monitor, May 2, 2011). From personal observation and experience as a teacher in Kasese district, some students do not attend school regularly while others arrive late at school. This indicates poor students' attendance which sometime results into high dropout rates.

As already mentioned, by introducing free and Universal Secondary Education, one of government's objectives was to make secondary education affordable. Government is paying the major share of secondary education costs as majority of families whose children are under the USE cannot afford to pay the costs (MoES 2009). The Education Act (2008) stipulates that "no person or agency shall levy or order another person to levy any charges for purposes of education in primary or post primary institution implementing UPE or UPPET programme. No pupil or student shall be sent away from school or denied access to education for failure to pay any contribution". For this reason, there is no doubt that the Government of Uganda takes cognisance of education as a tool for individual and national development. That is why the government found it prudent to introduce free and universal education to her citizens.

According to the Government White Paper on Education (1992), government attaches great importance to the development of education in Uganda. It recognises the fact that education is a powerful tool for transformation of society. The White Paper further indicates that education provides a platform through which people achieve moral, intellectual, ideological, cultural and social development. More so, education plays a key role in attaining national goals of unity, democracy, economic progress and security for all citizens (White Paper 1992).

However, as pointed out in the Educational Magazine of 1999, one thing is clear. Whether the expanded educational opportunities will translate into meaningful development for an individual or society or not, depends ultimately on whether people actually learn well as a

result of those educational opportunities. Certainly absenteeism and late arrival at school adversely affect students' attainment of the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Absentees normally miss out on some of the key curriculum content taught in their absence.

According to the Strategic Plan for USE in Uganda (2009), it was noted that secondary education students were not acquiring adequate skills and knowledge for either further education or the world of work (MoES 2009). This could be attributed to poor school attendance by students resulting from apparent absenteeism and late arrival. Such behaviour reduces students' contact time with their teachers and learning materials thereby limiting attainment of the necessary knowledge and skills.

Although the Uganda Demographic Health Survey (2006) indicated that poverty was the main determinant of non-attendance in education, this alone is not the only determinant of whether a child is or is not enrolled in school. While the impact of poverty can be expected to worsen attendance rates, with the free and universal secondary education in Uganda poverty would no longer be an issue. It is evident that more needs to be learnt about the wide spectrum of factors that impact on educational access in Uganda and what could be done to support school children. Bearing in mind that at the heart of schooling is the child, the rights to schooling and quality education should be protected. Further, a more systematic study needs to be undertaken in order to investigate how children facing difficult circumstances in the rural settings could be assisted to overcome barriers to educational access. As Owolabi asserts, the distribution of school network has a far reaching effect on the participation rate of youngsters in school education especially as far as students' attendance is concerned

(Owolabi, 2006). It is against this background that the researcher carried out a study about school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese District.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Since the inception of the USE programme in 2007, enrolment in secondary schools in Uganda has steadily risen. However, despite the rise in enrolment, it has been observed that students' absenteeism, late arrival and drop out are still a serious problem. This behavior has resulted into poor students' attendance in the country and in Kasese district in particular. If secondary education in Uganda is free, why then is the situation happening that way. There seems to be a problem which, if not addressed, may jeopardise the aims of USE in Uganda. Generally little is known about school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in the country and in Kasese district in particular. Therefore this study is intended to examine the state of secondary school accessibility in Kasese district and its relationship with students' attendance.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to establish whether there was a significant relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese District.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

This study was guided by the following research objectives;

- (i) To examine the current state of secondary school accessibility in Kasese district.

- (ii) To establish the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district.
- (iii) To establish the relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district.
- (iv) To find out measures which school administrators use to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- (i) What is the current state of secondary school accessibility in Kasese district?
- (ii) What are the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district?
- (iii) Is there a significant relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district?
- (iv) What are the measures which school administrators use to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district?

### **1.6 Research Hypothesis**

Ho: There is no significant relationship between schools accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

### **1.7.1 Geographical Scope**

The study was carried out in Busongora County in Kasese district in western Uganda. Kasese district borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the west, Kamwenge district in the east, Kabarole and Bundibugyo districts in the north and Bushenyi district in the south. The district has two counties (Bukonzo and Busongora) and a municipality. The study was conducted in Busongora county which had a total of twenty (20) secondary schools. Choosing one out of the two counties was to make the study manageable in terms of time and financial resources available and also limit the scope of the study.

Further, the study focused on only secondary schools only, both private and government aided. This was as a result of the USE/UPET Headcount Report (2009) which established that Kasese district, and other districts in the country, had cases of students' absenteeism and dropout particularly in secondary schools. Busongora County was also chosen because the researcher was well versed with the area and as such reaching the respondents was within the resources that were available for the study.

### **1.7.2 Content Scope**

The content scope focused on school accessibility towards students' attendance in secondary schools. That is the distance at which secondary schools are located from the students' homes (distance travelled by students to and from school), the time it takes students to get to

school, mode of transport used by students and the reasons for students' poor attendance (absenteeism and late arrival) in secondary schools. Here the researcher wanted to know the relationships between these variables with students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district.

The time scope was the year 2011. This was to come up with up-to-date data on the issues of secondary school accessibility and students' absenteeism in the district.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings from this study could be used to inform an intervention that seeks to increase access to learning and thereby reduce drop-out and repetition rates in secondary schools in Kasese and elsewhere in the country.

The findings would be of importance if individual secondary schools were established in cooperation with communities, seeking support that can ensure proper accessibility and school attendance. One such area for improvement is the level of knowledge, both in the school and in the nearby communities. In this way a new more open and flexible model of schooling could be developed to help meet the needs of children in attending secondary education.

It is further hoped that the results of the study would offer useful information about supplemental educational services specific to children's school access and attendance needs. The study findings would certainly be helpful to education planners and policy makers at all

levels, enabling them make informed decisions. This way, the state could be guided on how to set standards for the provision of quality educational services in an attempt to raise educational access.

The study would provide researched information, in respect to school accessibility in secondary education (particularly in Kasese district). This could be used by policy makers and other stakeholders as a basis for decision making regarding the establishment and operation of secondary schools in the country.

The findings of the study would hopefully benefit different stakeholders in the education system in Uganda. The Ministry of Education and Sports and development partners in the education sub-sector may use the findings of the study in defining catchment areas for a secondary school in Uganda. This could enable them give appropriate support to education programmes in the country. The results of the study could thus feed into the planning framework of the USE programme and benefit the education planners at the MoES in advising Government appropriately. This would certainly translate into essential benefits to the final consumers of the educational services who are the students.

They would benefit by attending schools in close proximity to their residential places when Government sets standards in regard to school accessibility. In addition, the study would add new Knowledge and open up avenues for further research.

### **1.9 Underlying Theoretical Perspective to the Study**

The access of children to formal education depends on accessibility. How accessible the school is to a child depends on, among other things, where the school is located. The

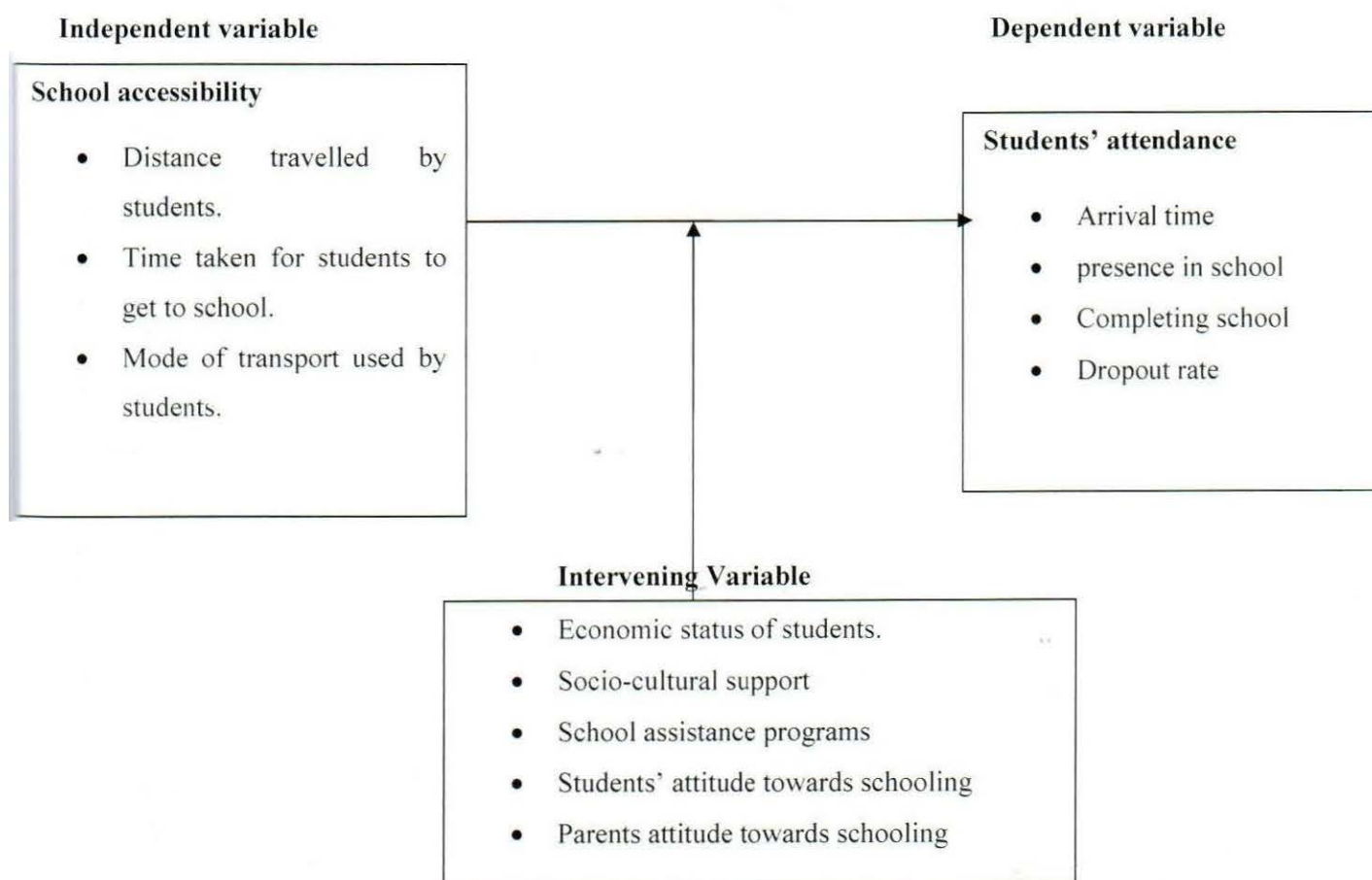
distribution of network of school has a far reaching effect on participation rate of youngsters in school education. This is what is termed as physical accessibility. Sometimes students from sparsely populated areas have to trek for long distances before they can get to any secondary school. If the home is too far from the school the student gets exhausted and worn-out before reaching school and concentration in the first few lessons is adversely affected (Owolabi 2006).

It is clear from Owolabi's explanation, that attendance of students is affected by the distance they travelled every morning and evening to and fro school. Therefore, there is no doubt that the effect of the distribution of school network is reflected in the students' attendance rates.

#### **1.10 The Constructed Conceptual Framework**

The framework explains that school accessibility affects students' attendance in secondary schools. School accessibility is the independent variable and students' attendance is the dependent variable. The intervening variables that influence the relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance include the economic background/status of students, the socio-cultural support, school assistance programmes and students' and parents' attitude towards schooling (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: A conceptual framework on school accessibility and students attendance**



*Source: developed with ideas adopted from Owolabi, 2006*

### **.10.1 Description of the Model**

When a school is located within students' reach, that is to say the school is near the students' residential places/homes; it implies that the distance between school and a student's home is short. The student, therefore, can arrive at school early, and with ease, taking the shortest time possible irrespective of the means of transport used if all the intervening variables are kept constant. This means that school accessibility is good. However, where the distance between school and students' residential places/homes is long,

and the means of getting to school is on foot, the student will always take more time to get to school and may arrive late. With such a situation prevailing, school accessibility is said to be poor. If a student uses a means of transport which is quicker, such as bicycle, motorcycle, or vehicle, the student will take shorter time to get to school and will always arrive in time irrespective of the distance. In this case, school accessibility is still good. Therefore the distance travelled by a student, coupled with the means of transport they use to get to school greatly impact on students' arrival time at, and attendance in, school. This determines school accessibility. Thus, where school accessibility is poor, students may consistently get late, be absent and even drop out of school. \*

However, school accessibility, in itself alone, may not explain students' absenteeism in, and late arrival at, school. It is presumably possible that there are other factors which contribute to this behaviour. Thus the scope of this study also covered other factors that may influence students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district. These are pointed out in chapter five.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides review of literature related to school accessibility and students' attendance in schools around the world. Sources included books, journals, periodicals, magazines and information obtained from internet. Generally little is known about school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Uganda and especially in Kasese District. The literature review was done under the following sub-headings: relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools; distance and time taken by students to travel to school; absenteeism and lateness; reasons for absenteeism and lateness; implication of absenteeism and lateness; strategies employed to overcome the problem of absenteeism and late-arrival in schools.

#### **2.1 Relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools**

According to Owolabi, (2006), the access of children to formal education depends on accessibility. How accessible the school is to a child depends on, among other things, where the school is located. The distribution of network of school has a far reaching effect on participation rate of youngsters in school education. This is what is termed as physical accessibility. Sometimes students from sparsely populated areas have to trek for long distances before they can get to any secondary school. If the home is too far from the school

the student gets exhausted and worn-out before reaching school and concentration in the first few lessons is adversely affected.

It is clear from Owolabi's explanation that attendance of students is affected by the distance they travel every morning and evening to and fro school. Therefore, there is no doubt that the effect of the distribution of school network is reflected in the students' attendance rates.

## **2.2 Distance and time taken by students to travel to school**

The study by the World Bank Rural Access Initiative, found that the location of a school, particularly in some parts of Africa, has a dramatic impact on school attendance (World Bank, 2007). Long distances from homes to schools are a likely cause of under participation in education among rural communities in Africa where only few schools exist (Malenya 2008). According to De Jaeghere (2004), in Africa lack of formal secondary schools in close proximity to girls' homes prohibits their participation.

As Owolabi, 2006 points out, It has been observed that an average student will get too wearied to learn with comfort if he has to trek for more than 5 km or if he has to spend more than 45 minutes on trekking. But often we find some children in the developing countries who trek for distances, or take time in trekking quite in excess of these norms. For this reason some countries are setting for themselves goals of providing schools within 5 km (or within 45 minutes of walking distance) of every child.

The average walking distance to a secondary school in the Republic of South Africa is 5.0 km (Information Brief, 2005). As for Uganda, there are no set standards for walking

distances to schools. Given the different socio-economic and geographical factors, Uganda would definitely have different standards for average walking distance to school.

According to the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Report of 2000, cited in Ndagire (2006), the distance from home to school, that is, a long journey to school decreases pupil performance due to late arrival and being too tired to concentrate properly. Similarly, Owolabi (2006) points out that; from the pedagogic point of view, there is a limit to how far a lad's place of abode should be from school. He should not be made to cover a distance that would make him too physically exhausted to attend well to the first lesson. An average child will get too wearied to learn with comfort if he has to trek for more than 5km or if he has to spend more than 45 minutes on trekking.

From the foregoing, it is imperative that the school catchment area should be clearly defined in order for any country to talk of good access to education.

A study by Kitavi and Westhuizen (1997) in Kenya showed that students from poor families who could not afford to pay transport costs had to walk long distances to school. In such situations, by the time the students reached their schools they were already exhausted and less motivated to learn. The long distance to school can also lead to lateness and absenteeism. Some students can drop out of school altogether (Kitavi and Westhuizen, 1997).

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### 2.3 Absenteeism and lateness

Schools, in any country around the world, are concerned with improving or maintaining student attendance. According to the U.S Department of Education (1998), 15% of public

school teachers reported that student absenteeism was a “serious problem” at their schools due to factors such as illness and truancy among students.

Efforts to get students to school range from the use of enticements such as ice cream to threats of imprisonment for parents or guardians of chronically truant students (Henderson, 1999). Often, decisions to employ these methods are based on anecdotal evidence, rather than empirical studies. This may be due to the fact that little research exists on school programs or practices to improve student attendance (Corville-Smith, 1995; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). There is no evidence of empirical research done in Uganda to improve on students’ attendance, especially in the rural areas such as Kasese. As already mentioned, this study is intended to explore the reasons for poor students’ attendance, and find out whether there is a significant relationship between school accessibility and students’ attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district.

The available evidence supports the common sense that children who attend school regularly are more successful in schooling, and are more likely to be promoted to the next level. A Project Evaluation Study in Guatemala found that children who were promoted from grade 1 to 2 had a significantly higher attendance and punctuality record than those that did not pass school tests (Chesterfield, 2005). Children who had to repeat first grade were present only about two-thirds of the attendance time, whereas promoted children were present over 80 percent of the time when classes were held. A noticeable gender difference was also found in this study; girls had consistently poorer rates of attendance and punctuality than boys. However, this gender difference may not have necessarily been due to distance to and fro

school. Therefore, this is yet another area of interest that researchers can explore to find out the reasons for the differences in attendance rates of boys and girls.

This study in Guatemala further found that punctuality was the single most important variable explaining student promotion. This is not surprising, as students who arrive on time are able to follow explicit instructions provided by the teacher at the start of classes, whereas those who are late will have difficulty following and doing the class assignments properly. The impact of punctuality in school on promotion is also clear. Results from that study showed that punctual students were seven times more likely to be promoted than children who were tardy.

#### **2.4 Reasons for absenteeism and lateness**

School and home factors influence students' school attendance. Similarly, the socio-economic status and educational level of parents influence students' school attendance. Geographical location of school, students' attitude towards school and subjects, inadequate supervision of students' activities by teachers and parents and poor teaching methods and lack of facilities, do affect students' school attendance (Oghuvbu 1999; Alio 2003). In such circumstances students develop negative attitude towards school, resulting into poor attendance. This problem is made worse by non-employment of school leavers, repetition of class by students (Okwelle 2003).

The consequences of missing classes have far reaching effects on the students' school work. Such effects include increasing probability of dropping out, discouraging hard work, and stressing the students while they are trying to cover missed lessons. In turn, this increases chances of failing tests and exams (Mwinzi and Kimengi, 2006). According to Mensch and Lloyd (1997), school-based factors that reduce the learning time include disruptions due to teachers' absence and missed classes for chores or punishments. In line with the foregoing, as reported by the Daily Monitor of May 2, 2011, a survey carried out by stakeholders from the Ministry of Education and Sports showed absenteeism of both teachers and pupils as one of the most burning challenges in schools. Regarding pupils' absenteeism, teachers in the north and central parts of Uganda complained that it was impossible for them to teach a full class. This problem was partly blamed on the economic activities carried out in the surveyed areas. The survey revealed that most of the children do not attend school during the rainy season and on market days (Daily Monitor, May 2, May 2011). Consequently, the situation may not be any different for secondary schools in the rest of Uganda.

## **2.5 Implications of absenteeism and lateness**

Several implications for both students and the community have been identified as problematic when student absenteeism increases. Students who have absenteeism problems generally suffer academically and socially. According to Baker and Jansen (2000), students who were frequently absent had lower achievement in their academic performance. In addition, schools that experience high rates of absenteeism suffer loss of learning by students and loss of instructional time (Mayer & Mitchell, 1993).

Essentially, when students are absent, not only do they miss learning opportunities, but also it means that the teachers must find time to try to provide remediation when the students return, implying additional loss of instructional time taken from other students.

The implications of absenteeism are felt outside the classroom as well. Continued losses of instruction or poor academic achievement among students with high levels of absenteeism were essential characteristics of students who later dropped out of school, (Mayer & Mitchell, 1993). Those who drop out of school frequently move on to lives of delinquency and crime, which has a tremendous impact on society. Lotz and Lee (1999) indicate that acts of delinquency are more frequent among students who exhibit low grades, have spotty attendance, and later drop out of school.

## **2.6 Strategies employed to solve the problem of students' absenteeism and late-arrival in schools.**

Among the strategies employed for solving the problems of poor students' attendance in schools include a combination of school, family and community based approaches. These approaches are the mechanisms employed by the schools, family and the community as a whole in dealing with the problem of absenteeism in, and late arrival at school.

According to a research conducted by Roderick et al., (1997) in Chicago on school attendance and late-coming, cutting and attendance problems are likely to spread to the more conforming students if the attendance problem is not dealt with quickly. This is due to the

fact that students are allowed to enter classrooms even after lessons have started. At times half the class can be absent during the first lesson. This phenomenon can affect those students who come to school daily and early enough before the lessons start. As Mae (1999) says, an important aspect of education is the amount of time a student actually spends in the classroom. When students arrive late at school, cut class, or disrupt class by coming in late, they lose precious classroom time and the opportunity to learn while disrupting other students' opportunities to learn, especially those who arrive early.

Roderick further explains that the most often missed class is the first period class. The blame for missing first period class is often placed on the increased responsibility of students getting themselves ready for school in time.

Improving student attendance at school requires a holistic approach that addresses school and classroom factors, as well as factors outside of school. Several school characteristics and classroom practices are predictive of student absenteeism. Finn and Voelkl (1993) found that large schools were more likely to have attendance problems than small schools. Also, student perceptions of the classroom or teacher as chaotic, uncaring, or boring, were associated with student absenteeism (Roderick et al., 1997). By contrast, attendance was better, even in high-poverty schools, if there were quality teachers, courses, and extracurricular activities (Eskenazi, Eddins, & Beam, 2003).

Schools and teachers, however, cannot solve attendance problems alone. Family processes also are important influences on students' attendance in school. Specific parental behaviours such as monitoring students' whereabouts, parent-child discussions about school, volunteering at school, and PTA membership, have all been shown to predict lower levels of

truancy among students (McNeal, 1999). Although most schools might not have collaborated systematically with families to reduce absenteeism, home-school connections are recognized as an important strategy to increase student attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Educators too have a responsibility to help families and communities become involved in reducing student absenteeism. Studies show that when schools develop programs of school, family, and community partnerships, they have higher levels of parent involvement (Epstein, 2001). This results into higher percentages of students passing standardized achievement tests (Sheldon, 2003), and schools take fewer disciplinary actions on students (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). There is good reason therefore to believe that the development of partnership programs between the school, families and the community in general can decrease absenteeism. This is because high quality partnership programs implement a range of family and community involvement activities focused on specific school goals for students (Epstein, et al., 2002).

Reynolds (1987) has identified factors associated with high performing schools which have, amongst other things, curbed learner absenteeism. They include; Purposeful leadership by the principal, marked by power-sharing and consultation amongst the teachers; involvement of the deputy principal and staff in policy decisions; involvement of teachers in curriculum planning and curriculum implementation, as well as class allocations. Other factors include consistency amongst teachers in terms of teaching approaches. Such approaches may include: intellectually challenging teaching approach (marked by 'higher order' questions and statements); work centred environment, maximum effective communication between teachers and students, especially communication with groups or the whole class; thorough record-keeping of pupils' progress; parental involvement (reading at home, educational

visits) and a positive climate in the classroom (less emphasis on punishment and more on reward). Other researchers such as Sheldon & Epstein, 2002 have indicated that communicating clearly with families is a useful strategy of reducing student absenteeism.

Studies conducted by Licht, Gard, & Guardino, on communication between the school management and the parents of the students found that phone calls to parents of absent students were associated with improved student attendance (Licht, et al 1991). Also, providing timely information to families about attendance helped improve attendance rates in high schools (Roderick, et al., 1997). Keeping parents informed of their children's attendance at school allowed parents to monitor and supervise their children more effectively.

In summary therefore, schools should be physically accessible to children. Schools should be in reasonable and safe geographical proximity to students' residential places. This seems to be particularly important in ensuring good and equitable access to secondary education as regards the Universal Secondary Education in Uganda. The distance covered by students while travelling to school is bound to affect the attendance and arrival at school and consequently the general performance of students in school.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter gives a description of the study area, research design, the target population, samples and sampling techniques. It also includes a description of the research instruments, their validity and reliability and procedures for data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A case study design was developed in order to gain insights into not only what is happening to students' access to schooling and to attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district, but also why events might be happening that way. Case studies are particularly useful for studying pertinent issues within their natural context. In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are being posed; when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. Therefore, case studies are valuable for illuminating complex social phenomena such as the issues of school accessibility and students' attendance.

Case study, in its most rigorous form, requires more than finding an interesting "case". Case study research has come to be stereotyped as the weakest and most imprecise of the social science methods. However, it should be noted that case study research provides an opportunity to investigate phenomena within their real-life context and that they can be

quite rigorous in design, often involving single and multiple case studies, and also including quantitative evidence. In this study, the case study approach was used as part of a formative research strategy to gain a sharpened understanding of what should be included in any upcoming intervention package.

However, not much has been done to study factors that influence access to learning and retention in conventional public secondary schools in Uganda in general and Kasese district in particular. In this context of considerable uncertainty about the phenomenon under study, an exploratory case study approach was selected in order to provide an in-depth description of factors at work within schools and communities that can either support or raise barriers to the access and attendance of students in school. Since case study research involves the study of a particular phenomenon or concern within a real-life setting, it lends itself well to situations where it may not be possible, or desirable, to distinguish the issue under investigation from its context. This has important advantages for gaining insight into issues of access and participation in education, where a multiplicity of factors is likely to influence any particular child's schooling. The aim was to give insights into the complex social phenomena being studied, in context and as much as possible from the perspectives of those being studied.

A cross-sectional survey or multiple case study design was adopted to explore how issues of access and attendance play out across several contexts. One common concern or phenomenon is addressed, but multiple cases are used to illustrate that concern. The

multiple cases are thus instrumental in addressing a particular concern, rather than of solely intrinsic value.

Further, the choice of case study had been informed, in part, by the suggestion in the literature that distances, means of transport, increasing poverty and vulnerability impacts on the well-being of children living in rural areas in a different way from those living in urban settings.

### **3.2 Population and sample Size**

The study participants included students, class teachers and head-teachers. The total number of secondary schools in the area of study was twenty (20). The population for students in the sampled secondary schools was approximately six thousand five hundred (6500). The class teachers were approximately one hundred sixty (160) while the head teachers were twenty (20). These categories of respondents were chosen because they were deemed to have vital information and experience regarding the variables under investigation in this study. They had the experience and knowledge about the required for this study.

Samples were taken from the target population, that is, secondary schools, and the study participants as well. The sample size for this study consisted of nineteen (19) secondary schools, three hundred sixty two (362) students, seventy six (76) class teachers and nineteen (19) headteachers. This sample size and the size of participants were determined using the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) table cited in Barifaijo K.M et al. The table was used because the sample size it proposes is representative of the population from which the sample is selected.

Therefore, since the sample size was a good representative of the population from which the samples were selected, the results of this study would be well generalized across the whole population.

Each class (S.1 – S.4) was represented by one class teacher. Every head teacher of a sampled school automatically participated in the study. The sample size of the was as summarized in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Showing study sample size**

<b>Population category</b>	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Sampled size</b>
Students	6500	362
Class teachers	160	76
Headteachers	20	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>6680</b>	<b>457</b>

### **3.3 Sampling techniques**

The study used probability and non-probability sampling to select study participants. The sampling techniques that were used specifically included purposive and random sampling techniques. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting sample students who were chosen from among boys and girls from different classes and or streams in each sample

school. Simple random sampling technique was preferred because it allowed each possible sample to have an equal probability of being picked; and it also gave each individual in the population an equal chance of being included in the sample (Mubazi K.E 2008). Stratified sampling was also used because the population of participants had two different groups, that is, girls and boys.

This technique ensured that the samples reflected the characteristics of the population from which they were chosen.

Purposive sampling was used particularly in selecting class teachers and head teachers. The class teacher of a sampled class or stream and the head teacher of a sampled school were purposively selected. They were deemed to know their students better and had relevant information about their students as required for this study.

When selecting schools, the researcher wrote each name of a secondary school in Busongora county, Kasese district, on a separate piece of paper. The researcher put the pieces of papers prepared in a box and mixed them thoroughly. Then the researcher picked out nineteen pieces of paper (without looking) one after the other. These were considered for the sample schools.

To select the students to participate in the study, the researcher used both stratified and random sampling techniques. The samples were chosen from four classes (senior one to senior four). For some schools the classes had at least two streams. In each class/stream, the students were grouped into girls and boys. The researcher went to a class/stream and established the number of girls and boys present at the time. He then put folded pieces of

paper that were equal to the number of girls into one box and others equivalent to the number of boys into another box. The boxes were labelled girls only and boys only respectively. The researcher had written letters 'SG' for sample girls and 'SB' for sample boys on a number of pieces of paper equal to the number of the desired sample from each group (girls and boys) for every class/stream. Other pieces of paper were left blank.

The researcher then mixed up the pieces of paper thoroughly and asked each student to pick one piece of paper from the box without returning it into the box. The girls picked from one box labelled "girls only" and the boys picked from another box labelled "boys only." Students who picked the pieces of paper written on 'SG' and 'SB' were requested to go to a specified place/room where they were addressed and given the questionnaires to fill in.

### **3.4 Research Instruments**

The main tools for collecting data in this research were questionnaires, interview guide and observation guide.

### **3.5 Questionnaires**

The questionnaires were administered to students and class teachers. The questionnaire for students and class teachers comprised both close-ended and open-ended items. The items were based on students' attendance in regard to the specified variables. The questionnaire for students contained ten (10) items, some of them close-ended based on a four (4) point Likert

scale. The class teachers' questionnaire comprised of fifteen (15) items. The questionnaire was favoured over other related data collection methods because it allowed for collection of data within a short period of time from a relatively literate and large population.

### **3.6 Interview Guide**

This method was chosen because it allowed for in-depth probing of headteachers thus leading to collection of more information. Through this method the researcher got clear expression of the feelings, opinions and attitudes from tone of response and facial expression of respondents. Interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretation of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. At the same time the researcher could clarify and elaborate the purpose of the research.

Interview was scheduled for head-teachers purposely to collect information about school accessibility, regularity of students' attendance, causes of students' absenteeism and late arrival to school, measures put in place to control absenteeism and late arrival of students in their schools. The interview generated information about distance travelled by a student whose home is nearest to, and farthest from the school, the time taken by these students to get to school, the means of transport used by students to get to school, the average number of absentees and late comers in the school per day. The interviewer sought head teachers' explanation of measures they were using in controlling students' absenteeism and late arrival in their schools. The interview guide consisted of fourteen (14) open-ended items.

### **3.7 Observation Guide**

The researcher used an observation guide to establish the means of transport they were using as they arrived at school; and the number of students (girls and boys) who arrived at school past the official school opening time when the first lessons of the day had started.

### **3.8 Document Analysis**

The researcher also generated information about students' attendance, using documentation available in the schools. The relevant documents consulted were class registers. The class registers gave information on number of absentees on a daily, weekly, monthly and termly basis.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability of the study**

#### **3.9.1 Reliability**

Joppe (2000) defines reliability as ...the extent to which results are consistent over time and accurate representation of the population under study is referred to as reliability. In this study reliability was determined through the test-retest method of the questionnaires at two different times to establish stability within the attribute of the research instrument. The results of the test-retest method produced a stable measure, and the results were similar. The researcher established reliability of the findings by adhering to the consistency with which questionnaire test items answered or to individual's scores that remained relatively the same. A high degree of stability then indicated a high degree of reliability, which meant the results

were repeatable. Further, a high consistency and accuracy of the tests and scores from the tests proved the research instrument repeatability and internal consistency, and, therefore reliability.

### **3.9.2 Validity**

Validity determines whether the research instruments truly measures what it was intended to measure. In this study, the researcher determined validity by asking a series of questions, and looked for the answers in the research of others through the application of the initial concept, notion, question or hypothesis that determined which data was to be gathered and how it was to be gathered.

Further, the researcher applied triangulation methods as a strategy (test) for improving the validity of research or evaluation of findings in order to control bias and establish valid propositions. This included the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

### **3.10 Data Source and Types**

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected by the researcher using questionnaires, interviews, observation and document analysis. The researcher administered questionnaires to students and class teachers. An interview involving probing for gathering more information was administered for headteachers. More information for study was obtained from records available in schools specifically class registers.

### **3.11 Study Variables**

The independent variables included distance travelled by students from home to school, time taken by students to reach school and means of transport used by students to school. The students' attendance was the dependent variable.

### **3.12 Procedure for data collection**

To carry out the study effectively, the researcher obtained permission and a letter of introduction from the Department of Educational Planning and Management, Kyambogo University. The letter of introduction was presented to the head teacher of every sampled school, asking for permission to allow their schools to participate in the study. Having been granted permission, the researcher agreed with the head teacher on an appropriate date and time to conduct the interview and interact with the other study participants. When the agreed time came, the researcher personally conducted the interview and recorded the responses himself in order to minimize secretarial errors. After the interview, the head teacher introduced the researcher to the teachers, more particularly the class teachers. He (headteachers) then asked one of the teachers to help the researcher by introducing him to the students. By so doing the researcher was able to collect data from the study participants.

The purpose of the study was explained to all participants. They were assured of total confidentiality of the information they provided. Participants were requested to participate in the study freely. The researcher then selected samples from the students and class teachers.

Respondents from each class were selected and gathered in a separate room (in turns) where they were addressed and given the questionnaires. Each respondent was given one questionnaire to fill individually. At the same time, selected class teachers were given questionnaires and filled them in a place of their convenience. This ensured freedom of opinion. The researcher adhered to research ethics by seeking the consent of the respondents and respecting their rights.

### **3.13 Data analysis and management**

Data collected was standardized using various control measures, including checking for completeness and consistency before the data entry process. Questionnaires were sorted out and each questionnaire was given a unique identification number before data entry. These numbers were entered and used as a check out for any inconsistencies in the data. The data were checked by the researcher to ascertain their completeness and internal consistency. The collected data were cleaned up through thorough editing. Thereafter, the data were categorised, coded and finally summarised. Quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) to give a description of the distances travelled by students, the time they take to get to school, the means of transport used by students and the number of absentees and late comers in the selected schools. The quantitative data were therefore presented in frequencies and tables.

Cross tabulations were done for the dependent variables against the independent variables to establish the relationships between the different variables. The researcher used Pearson

Correlation to come up with the relationships. The Pearson Correlation was used to find out the most significant relationship between variables. Qualitative data were entered and analysed for meaning and making interpretations and conclusions.

### **3.14 Limitations and delimitations**

The use of perceived rather than actual distances was a limitation of this study.

There were also some field occurrences that limited the data collection process. For example, some respondents, especially the class teachers were uncooperative. They could not comply with the research procedures. Regarding the lack of cooperation from class teachers, the researcher first created rapport with them by explaining the purpose of the study and assuring them of total confidentiality of their responses, thereby seeking their willingness to participate in the study. This did not completely eliminate the limitation as some few class teachers could not return the questionnaires. However, the researcher used all means including calling them on phone and going to the residential places, where it necessitated, to collect the filled in questionnaires.

In some cases, it rained in the morning thus affecting students' arrival time. Similarly, the researcher could not arrive in time when it rained in the morning. For some schools, this made it impossible for the researcher to make an observation and take record of students who were arriving late. The researcher used an umbrella as and when it rained. This helped in overcoming the effect of rain to some extent.

Besides rain, the topography in some areas made it hard for the researcher to reach some of the schools in time to make an observation for the students who arrived late. The researcher hired a motor cycle which enabled him overcome this barrier. In some schools, roll call of students had not been taken on a regular basis. Some of the class teachers had not taken roll call of students in their classes. For this reason, the researcher could not easily ascertain the number of absentees using class registers in most of the schools visited.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises of data analysis, presentation and discussion of the research results of data collected from the field. The study investigated school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district. The study particularly focused on the state of secondary school accessibility, the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools, the relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools and the measures put in place by school administrators to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools. Data was analyzed according to research objectives using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists) as presented below. Researcher had proposed a total of 457 respondents to provide data for the study but only 403 (328 students, 59 class teachers, and 16 headteachers) returned the questionnaires making the response rate at 88.2% percent of the total projected number of respondents.

#### 4.1 State of secondary school accessibility in Kasese district

The first objective of the study examined the state of Secondary School accessibility in Kasese district. According to the objective, the state of the secondary school accessibility was determined in terms of distance travelled by the students to school, time taken by the students to reach school and the means of transport used by the students to travel to and from



school. The research question was “what is the current state of secondary school accessibility in Kasese district?”

### 4.1.1 Approximate distance travelled by the students

Students were asked to estimate the approximate distance they travelled to get to school from their respective homes. Their responses were analyzed as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Approximate distance travelled by students from home to school**

<b>Distance in Km</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
0 to 2Km	108	32.9
3 to 5Km	73	22.3
Above 5Km	57	17.4
Not sure	90	27.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data

According to the results of the analysis as shown in table 2, the highest number of students travelled to schools for at least 0-2Km from their places of residence (32.9%); followed by those who were not sure of the distance they travelled to their respective schools (27.4%). Those who travelled for about 3-5Km constituted 22.3% while those who travelled for above 5Km were the least in number (17.4%). This implied that in terms of distance travelled to and from schools, only 32.9 percent of the students easily had access to secondary schools. The

majority percentage (39.7%) of these students travel long distances to access secondary schools. Although some (27.4%) did not know the approximate distance they travelled to schools, school accessibility was still difficult for most students.

#### 4.1.2 Approximate time used by students to travel to school

This variable helped the study find out the students' school accessibility in terms of the time they took travelling to schools. It was believed that if all students took few hours to reach their respective schools, they would be able to have enough time to relax and get prepared for the school programme. The details of the analysis were as summarized in table 3.

**Table 3: Approximate time used by students to travel to school**

<b>Time of travel</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 45min	117	35.7
45 to 60min	80	24.4
More than 60min	89	27.1
Not aware	42	12.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data

According to the results obtained in table 3, majority of the students were taking less than 45 minutes to reach schools (35.7%), followed by those who travelled for more than 60 minutes

(27.1%). Those who travelled between 45 to 60 minutes were 24.4%. This implied that, majority of the students travelled for more than 45 minutes or an hour to reach their respective schools. However, a correlation test between time taken to reach school and distance traveled was run to show the implication of these variables as shown in table 4.

**Table 4: Pearson correlation between distance travelled and time taken to reach schools**

Correlations			
		Approximate distance moved from home to school	What is the earliest time you reach school?
Approximate distance moved from home to school	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.021
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.708
	N	328	328
What is the earliest time you reach school?	Pearson Correlation	.021	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.708	.
	N	328	328

Source: primary data

Results obtained in table 4 indicated a weak positive correlation between the distance travelled and time taken by students to reach school (0.021 sig. 2-tailed). This implied that those from far away took more time to reach their respective schools than those who were near schools. These data therefore revealed that school accessibility positively depends on the distance from schools and time taken affect school attendance by students.

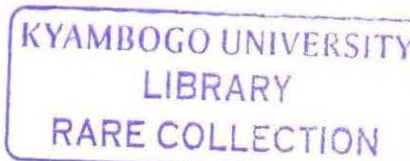
### 4.1.3 Means of transport used by the students to travel to and from school

The variable of the means of transport used by students to and from school helped the study to find out if the difficulties in accessing the schools in terms of distance were being overcome by students in Kasese district. Using questionnaire, the views of students on the means of transport they used to get to school were sought. The researcher practically observed students as they arrived at school to establish the means of transport they actually used. Frequencies and percentage for the various means of transport used by students were computed as presented in table 5.

**Table 5: Means of transport used by the students to travel to and from school**

Transport Means	Frequency	Percent
Footing	293	89.3
Bicycle	23	7.0
Vehicle	4	1.2
Motor cycle	8	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data



The results of the analysis in table 5 indicated that majority of the students accessed school by footing (89.3%); followed by a fairly meager numbers of students who accessed school using bicycles (7.0%). Those who used motor vehicle were the least with only 1.2% of the total student respondents. The findings were also in line with the observation made by the researcher where majority of students physically arrived at school by footing. The researcher

had earlier on observed that almost all students who arrived late at school were footing. This implied that there was difficulty by students in accessing schools in Kasese district given that the majority accessed schools by footing. This implied that school accessibility was not good.

#### 4.2 Reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival at school

The second objective of the study was to establish the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district. The research question was "what are the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district? From observation made by the researcher in some schools, the researcher had observed that the majority of late comers, a big number of them girls, arrived at school between 8.00 am and 9.00 am. A negligible number arrived past 9.00 am. Generally, students were asked to inform the study of the reasons for absenteeism and late arrival. Their responses were captured through a questionnaire administered to students as summarized in tables 6 and 7.

**Table 6: Reasons for Students' Absenteeism**

Category Label	Frequency	Percent
Long distance form home	108	33.0
Negligence of parents &	48	14.7
Teachers dogging lessons	48	14.7
Getting tired	55	16.8
Sickness	39	11.6
Others	30	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data

From table 6, the common reason given by students for absenteeism was the fact that they travelled long distances (33%) which rendered them tired. As a result they could not walk to school everyday (16.8%). This was followed by negligence of the parents and the teachers (14.7%). These factors lowered students' morale for attending school. However, 11.6% of the students attributed their absenteeism to sickness. This implied that the biggest problem which secondary school students in Kasese district faced was long distances they travelled, hence making school accessibility in Kasese district difficult resulting into absenteeism and late arrival.

In response to the reasons why the students arrived late at school, still with the use of questionnaires, the students' views were sought. A frequency analysis was run, as in the case of reasons for absenteeism. The results were as reflected in table 7.

**Table 7: Reasons for Students' late arrival**

Category Label	Frequency	Percent
Long distance	76	23.2
Home assignments	153	46.6
Dogging of classes by	37	11.3
Poor means of transport	60	18.3
Don't know	1	0.3
Others	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data

they travelled to school. Basing on this assumption, a correlation test between distance travelled and class attendance was run as shown in table 8.

**Table 8: Correlation between distance travelled by students and total class attendance**

Correlations			
		Total number of students in class	Approximate distance travelled by farthestst student
Pearson Correlation	Total number of students in class	1.000	-.291
	Approximate distance travelled by farthestst student	-.291	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Total number of students in class		.013
	Approximate distance travelled by farthestst student	.013	
N	Total number of students in class	59	59
	Approximate distance travelled by farthestst student	59	59

Source: Primary data

From the results of the analysis in table 8, with a single tailed significance Pearson correlation coefficient test at 95% confidence interval, the correlation coefficient value between distance travelled by students and total class attendance was -0.291. This indicated a negative correlation between distances travelled by the students and the total number of students that attended school per day. This implied that the longer the distance, the less the number of students that attended school.

#### 4.3.2 ANOVA test between distance travelled by students and total class attendance

This variable test aimed at finding out if there was any significant impact of distance travelled by the students on the total attendance of students in schools. In testing this relationship, the ANOVA coefficient test was run and the output was as reflected in table 9.

**Table 9: ANOVA test between distance travelled by students and total class attendance**

ANOVA<sup>b</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12991.598	1	12991.598	5.289	.025 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	140006.0	57	2456.246		
	Total	152997.6	58			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Approximate distance travelled by farthestst student

b. Dependent Variable: Total number of students in class

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From the ANOVA output in table 9, F value, 5.289 is greater than 2 and at the significance level, the P value is less than the 0.05 at 95% confidence. This therefore indicated a significant impact of distance travelled by the students on the total attendance of students. This implied that the students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district depended on the distance travelled by students from their local residences to their various schools.

#### 4.3.3 Distance travelled by students and total school enrolment

In this sub-section, the researcher was interested in knowing the impact of distance covered by students as they travelled from their residences to school on the general school enrolment

of students in Kasese district. In order to find this significance relationship, the Pearson correlation coefficient test was run producing the output as summarized in table 10.

**Table 10: Pearson correlation coefficient between distances travelled by students and school enrolment**

Correlations			
		Total Student number in the School	Approximate distance travelled by the furthest student
Pearson Correlation	Total Student number in the School	1.000	-.037
	Approximate distance travelled by the furthest student	-.037	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Total Student number in the School		.446
	Approximate distance travelled by the furthest student	.446	
N	Total Student number in the School	16	16
	Approximate distance travelled by the furthest student	16	16

Source: Primary data

From the output in table 10, with a single tailed significance Pearson correlation coefficient test at 95% confidence interval, the correlation coefficient value between approximate distance travelled by the students and total students number in the school was -0.037. Thus there was a very weak negative correlation between the distances travelled by the students and the total number of students in the schools. In relation to the study therefore, although the effect of the test was taken to be weak, it implied that the longer the distance, the less the number of total student enrolments in schools in Kasese district. In other words, the long

distance of students' homes away from schools negatively affects school accessibility and eventual total student enrolment.

To draw a final conclusion on the relationship between total enrolment and the total distance travelled by students from the various homes, a regression coefficient determinant test was undertaken and the results were as presented in table 11.

**Table 11: Coefficient determinant test between school enrolment and the total distance travelled by the students to school**

	Unstandardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B
	B			Lower Bound
(Constant)	519.999	2.308	.037	36.875
Approximate distance travelled by the farthest student	-4.128	-.139	.892	-67.875

Dependent Variable: Total Student number in the School

According to the results of the test in table 11, where t is the t test value, Sig is the t test significance value and B is the coefficient determinant, at 95% confidence interval, where the significance level, 'a' is 0.05, the p value is greater than 0.05. That is,  $0.892 > 0.05$  indicating a positive significant impact of the distance travelled by the students on the total

school enrolment in Kasese district. This therefore implied that the location of school in terms of distance from the students' homes negatively affects school enrolment in secondary schools in Kasese district.

#### **4.4 Measures used by school administrators to control Students' absenteeism and late arrival**

The fourth objective of the study sought for measures which school administrators use to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district.

The research question was "what are the measures which school administrators use to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district? The researcher had looked at class registers in some schools. Records indicated that some students' attendance was irregular. Cases of absenteeism were still prevalent amongst students. Using questionnaire survey, the views of 59 class teachers and 16 head teachers were sought on the measures put in place to control students' absenteeism and late arrival. Descriptive statistics of multiple response analysis was used as summarized in table 12.

**Table 12: Measures used by school administrators to control Students' absenteeism and late arrival**

<b>Teachers' views</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
	Punishments	18	30.5	30.5
	Inviting parents to school	16	27.1	27.1
	Sensitization of parents	15	25.4	25.4
	Involving community	6	10.2	10.2
	Building Hostels near sch.	4	6.8	6.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Headteachers' views</b>	Sensitize parents	4	25.0	25.0
	Building Hostels near sch.	1	6.3	6.3
	Involving Community	8	50.0	50.0
	Simple punishments	3	18.8	18.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Primary data*

According to the results of the analysis as indicated in table 12, there were variations in the views of class teachers and head teachers in terms of ranking of the measures used to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district. According to teachers' views, three main measures were identified. The most effective one was punishment (30.5%) followed by inviting students' parents to school (27.1%) and sensitization of parents (25.4%) among others. On the other hand, the three main measures according to head teachers were involving the community in fighting students' absenteeism, this being the most pronounced with 50% of the total responses followed by

sensitization of parents (25.0%) and giving simple punishments (18.8%) among others. This implied that while teachers who were ever in close contact with students advocated for direct punishment for absenteeism and late arrival, head teachers who were administrators, advocated for involving community in fighting absenteeism and late arrival by students.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the findings of the study. In this chapter, the summary and conclusions are drawn basing on analysis of data regarding the five major themes- the current state of secondary school accessibility, the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival at school, the relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools, measures put in place by school administrators to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools; and lastly, strategies that could be adopted to overcome the problem of students' absenteeism, and late arrival, in secondary schools in the country in general and Kasese district in particular.

#### 5.1 Discussion of Findings



This study examined the relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district. This was due to the fact that whereas the attendance of students enrolled under USE programme was expected to be hundred percent since no charges were levied and therefore no students were presumably sent away from school for failure to pay any financial contribution, students' absenteeism and late arrival at school were still apparent. In fact it was indeed a serious problem that one would wonder whether school accessibility was poor, leading to poor students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese

district. The study was therefore to find out whether there is a significant relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district.

The study had five specific objectives: To examine the current state of secondary school accessibility, to establish the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools, to establish the relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools, find out measures put in place by school administrators to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools and to recommend strategies that could be adopted to overcome the problem of students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in the country in general and Kasese district in particular. To achieve these objectives, the study employed a cross-sectional survey of the descriptive design using triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from nineteen (19) secondary schools where semi-structured questionnaires were administered to a sample of 403 respondents comprised of 328 students, 59 teachers and 16 head teachers both male and female.

#### **5.1.1 Status of secondary school accessibility**

In respect to research question one, which was about the state of secondary school accessibility in Kasese district, the study established that only 32.9 percent of the students easily had access to secondary schools while the largest percentage travelled long distances to access secondary schools. This rendered accessibility difficult. Students from far away took more time to reach their respective schools than those who were near schools.

The study therefore revealed that school accessibility positively depends on the distance students travel from their homes and the time they took to arrive at school. In other words, there was difficulty by students in accessing secondary schools in Kasese district because of the long distances they travelled to and from school.

The results of the findings on this objective concur with previous studies by Ndagire (2006), who noted that ...even though school fees are no longer an issue, the distance to secondary schools make it impossible for a lot of people to attend without going to a boarding school. So there are still a lot of issues that need to be addressed before the poor of Uganda really have access to secondary education.

The findings further concur with the study by the World Bank Rural Access Initiative which found that the location of a school, particularly in some parts of Africa, had a dramatic impact on school attendance (World Bank, 2007). Long distances from homes to schools were a likely cause of under participation in education among rural communities in Africa where only few schools existed (Malenya 2008).

Also the findings on this particular objective concur with the study by Galabawa and Narman (2004) which showed that accessibility to public goods such as employment opportunities, resources and welfare services related to the distance to be covered by an individual in an attempt to secure the good.

These data therefore revealed that school accessibility positively depends on the distance and time taken by students to attend school..

The results of the analysis concur with the study by Black et al. (2000) who speculated that the choice of travel mode for the school trip is an integral part of the household decision-making process. Whether an automobile is available at all depends on the household's decision about automobile ownership, which may be linked to residential location and employment decisions, which in turn may be linked to schooling decisions from the primary grades through high school.

The findings were also in line with the observation where majority of students physically arrived at school by footing. The researcher had earlier on observed that almost all students who arrived late at school were footing.

In terms of the means of transport used by students to reach school, the findings revealed that there was difficulty by students in accessing schools in Kasese district given that the majority accessed schools by footing.

The above results were in line with the British study by Reid Ewing, William Schroeer, and William Greene, (2006) which found a significant relationship between choice of mode of transport and perceived distance from home to school, with the probability of travelling by automobile instead of on foot increasing from 20% to 50% and 80%. Household automobile ownership and parent employment status were also significant determinants of school mode of choice, as were parental attitudes about the natural environment and automobile culture.

The absence of built environmental variables and the use of perceived instead of actual distances to school, were limitations of this study.

The findings further agree with a study of fifth-grade students at 34 California public elementary schools which showed that walking and biking rates were associated with neighborhood population density (positively) and school size (negatively). The number of intersections per street mile, a measure of walkability, was related to walking and biking rates in simple pair wise correlations but not in multiple regression models with other variables. However, it should be noted that the use of aggregate travel data is a serious limitation of this study.

### **5.1.2 Reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival**

Regarding the second research question, which focused on the reasons for students' absenteeism and late arrival, the study findings revealed that the common reason was the fact that students travelled long distances which rendered them tired. Hence they could not walk to school every day. Additionally, there was negligence of the parents and the teachers as well. This lowered students' morale for school attendance. Some parents assigned their children with many household responsibilities during school periods. Students could not accomplish them in time to go to school. This resulted into either absenteeism or late arrival at school. Other students attributed their absenteeism to sickness.

Thus basing on the findings on this objective, the study acknowledged that long distances travelled by students to and from school was the major cause of their absenteeism and late arrival at school. Other factors which aggravated the problem was households

responsibilities assigned to students by their parents /guardian; negligence of parents and teachers; and sickness. Both parents and teachers were negligent in following up students to ensure that they attended school regularly.

The results concur with a statement by Musyoka, in 2002 while launching his manifesto in his bid for the Presidency in Kenya. He had said that his administration would introduce free secondary education to expand access to higher education. He added that whereas the abolition of tuition would lower cost of secondary education, several challenges still remained that would hinder access. These included: teacher shortage, □lack of facilities in many schools and □high cost of boarding. This was also in line with the study by Chon (2007) who lamented that there were many factors that contributed to lack of access and attendance to education. The most prominent among them were location, gender and cost.

The study also established that the parents and guardians were mostly responsible for students' absenteeism and late arrival because of the roles and duties that they assign to their children. This affected students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district.

The results also concur with the study by Emore (2005) in USA who found out that lateness was more common among female students than male students. This was as a result of their involvement in domestic activities by their parents. Distance to school, school discipline, family background and school location were among causes of lateness among secondary school students.

### 5.1.3 Relationship between school accessibility and student's attendance

In regard to the third research question which was about the relationship between school accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools, the findings established that there was a negative correlation between the distances travelled by the students and the total number of students in the schools. This implied that there was no significant relationship between school accessibility and students attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district. However, the distance travelled by students was significantly related to their attendance. That is the longer the distance, the less the number of students that attended school.

The results of the analysis above concur with the findings from other earlier studies. In a study done to evaluate the relationship between school attendance and performance, researchers found that attending less than 100% of classes tended to reduce scholastic performance (Cohn, 2007). When schools were easy to access, children were more likely to get meaningful education and consequently have a financially stable future.

The results of the analysis on this objective further concur with the study by Mayer & Mitchell (1993) who concluded that three factors that may influence a high school graduate's decision to attend college are considered: (1) his ability, (2) the cost of attending college, and (3) the socio-economic status of his parents. The results, based on a probit analysis, indicated that factors (1) and (3) were strong influences on the probability of attending college. Among the socioeconomic variables, however, family income is the least important influence on college attendance. The low income elasticity of demand for college



implies that unrestricted income transfers to the low income population would not be an effective way of increasing their rate of college attendance.

#### **5.1.4 Measures used by school administrators to control students' absenteeism and late arrival**

The fourth research question was about measures which school administrators used to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district. The critical analysis on the measures which school administrators used to control students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools in Kasese district revealed that, according to teachers' views, three main measures, namely punishment, inviting parents and sensitizing them could be adopted. On the other hand, the three main measures, according to headteachers were: involving the community, sensitization of parents and giving simple punishment.

This implied that while teachers who are ever in close contact with students advocated for direct punishment for absenteeism and late arrival, head teachers who were administrators, advocated for involving community and sensitising in fighting absenteeism and late arrival by students. As administrators, the headteachers were aware of the distances students travelled to get to school. This could be the reason why they did not prioritise punishment for absentees and late comers. Instead they advocated for involvement of the community and sensitisation of parents in fighting absenteeism and late arrival.

### **5.1.5 Strategies that could be adopted to overcome students' absenteeism and late arrival**

In order to draw a final conclusion and recommendations, the researcher probed headteachers about strategies that could be adopted to overcome the problems of students' absenteeism and late arrival at school. The researcher established that: according to the views of teachers, sensitization of the parents and building nearby hostels, among others, would work well. On the other hand, according to head teachers, the problem could be best solved by encouraging dialogue between parents and teachers and critical involvement of the community to fight the habit. This implied that sensitization of the parents and students would be the best strategies to overcome students' absenteeism and late arrival in secondary schools since both the teachers and head teachers gave it the first priority in their recommendations among other suggested strategies.

The results on concur with the views of Wisconsin (2000) who noted that perhaps the strongest programs for deterring absenteeism were those in which communities take responsibility. He further noted that programs such as Oklahoma City's Truancy Habits Reduced Increasing Valuable Education (THRIVE) in US, promote picking up truants, holding them until their parents pick them up, and then following up with fines and/or jail time for non-compliance.

Another study that agrees with the results of this study was that by Baldauf (1999) who concluded that dropout rates, directly related to chronic absenteeism, had decreased from 13.9% to 11.8% after the implementation of sensitization program. Further, as a result of



consistent prosecuting for absenteeism and truancy and advocating high school diplomas and resumes for entry-level positions in such businesses as McDonald's, Tulsa County (OK), had reduced dropout rates by 45% and day-time crimes had been reduced by 22%. Police officers patrol the Bronx (NY), picking up truants, registering them for later tracking of offenses, and returning them to school (Gullatt & Lemoine, 1997).

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In view of the analysis and regarding the research questions, the study concluded that: the status of secondary school accessibility in Kasese district was still poor because most students were travelling long distances from their homes to the schools which they attended. Majority of the students travelled for more than 45 minutes to reach their respective schools. Additionally, most of the students travelled to school on foot. This resulted into frequent absenteeism and late arrival at school.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

The researcher has argued in this dissertation that School accessibility and attendance are factors that can determine the success of a child's education. Good attendance promotes academic performance of the child. However, lack of good accessibility to school can be extremely detrimental because it impacts on the attendance of any one student. There are various methodologies regarding what is the best strategy to improve attendance at school. Whether it is elementary school, middle school, high school or even college, attendance can

be a very big problem. In respect to this, and basing on the results of the study, the researcher recommends that:

### **5.3.1 School administrators**

Headteachers and teachers should create an environment that helps students feel good about what they are successful in, no matter how small it may seem. They should award academic and attendance letters of recognition, as is done for athletics. In other words, headteachers and teachers should jointly give out monthly awards to students who are never absent from school. They should give special privileges to students with perfect attendance. Even making mention that a student has not been absent since the beginning of the year when roll calling, can make an impact on students' attitude and behaviour towards school.

When students are absent, school administrators should immediately talk to their parents/guardians and the students in particular about why they were out of school. This will let them know that school administrators are aware, and that they care about their absence from school.

The school administration should forge relationships with local businesses where the business community would help keep students in school during school hours. For example, they can create a poster for businesses that states, 'We support youth in school and will not serve anyone under 16 during school hours. The same relationships should also be forged

with local law enforcement officers to make them school allies in showing the community, families, and students that school is the place to be.

The school authority should be clear and let students know at the beginning of the year that attendance is very important. They should not let it slide and then wake up one day upset that so many students are absent.

Teachers, headteachers and other school staff should set a good example and try to avoid taking sick leave or vacation days as much as possible. Obviously some absences on the part of teachers may be understandable, but teachers should not give the impression that they miss school without genuine reasons.

The entire school should have the same policy regarding absenteeism. It is very confusing for students when one teacher is very lax and does not mind about absences and another teacher is very strict.

The school authority and teachers in general should always find out underlying reasons for poor attendance. If one student or a number of students miss classes frequently, find out if there is an underlying problem. For example, is there a bully students are scared of? Is there a very harsh teacher students are trying to avoid? In short, school authorities should endeavour to find out the underlying reasons so that they could deal with the real problem.

### **5.3.2 Government and NGOs**

Government and NGOs should help build at least two secondary schools in every sub-county. This will reduce on the problems of students travelling for long distances that eventually results into late arrival or absenteeism.

Particularly, the government and NGOs both local and international should:

- Expand educational infrastructure through strong partnerships
- Enhance efficiency in the use of human and financial resources
- Develop sustainable poverty reduction and resource targeting mechanisms
- Increase household awareness on the importance of secondary school education.
- Initiate capacity building projects for teachers aimed at preparing them for various conditions not covered in current teacher training. This would include preparing teachers for multi grade teaching.

### **5.3.3 Policy makers and researchers**

‘For both local and international policy makers, more and better education should become the top priority because it empowers people to help themselves and thus helps to improve governance and to reduce corruption. A concerted effort for much more primary and secondary education, combining national and international efforts would appear to be the most promising route out of poverty and move towards sustainable development.

There should be special consideration of, and research into, alternative and innovative methods of improving access to secondary education. This may take the form of special consideration of the 'Multi-grade Teaching and Learning system' and 'Self Study Access Systems'.

#### **5.4 Areas for further study**

More research could be carried out about:

- Attendance rates among students in boarding and day secondary schools in Kasese district and other parts of the country.
- Attendance rates among students in single sex and mixed schools elsewhere in the country.



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## Appendix I: Students' questionnaire

### Introduction

Dear Respondent,

This is a questionnaire for Masters study on *School accessibility and students' attendance in secondary schools in Kasese district*. You have been selected to participate in this study as a respondent. You are kindly requested to fill this questionnaire as honestly as possible. Your responses to the items below will contribute greatly to the success of this study. The information you give will be treated confidentially and shall specifically be used for study purposes only.

### Part 1: Basic Information

- (i) Name of your school.....
- (ii) Your age (range): 10 – 12 ☐ 13 – 15 ☐ 16 – 18 ☐ 19 – 21 ☐
- (iii) Gender (tick one) Male ☐ Female ☐

### Part 2: School Accessibility

Please tick only one alternative which suits your situation.

1. What is the approximate distance of your home to your school?
 

(i) 0 – 2 Km ☐ (ii) 3 – 5 Km ☐ (iii) Above 5 Km ☐ (iv) I am not aware ☐
2. How much time do you use to move from home to your school?
 

(i) Less than 45 minutes ☐ (ii) About 45 to 60 minutes ☐

(iii) More than 60 minutes ☐ (iv) I am not aware ☐

3. On average, what earliest time do you arrive at your school?

(i) Before 7.00 Am ☐

(ii) Between 7.00 – 7.30 Am ☐

(iii) Between 7.30 – 8.00 Am ☐

(iv) After 8.00 Am ☐

4. What means of transport do you use to go to your school?

(i) Footing ☐

(ii) Bicycle ☐

(iii) Motor cycle ☐

(iv) Vehicle ☐

### Part 3: Factors affecting students' attendance in secondary schools

5. Have you ever been absent from your school on some day(s)?

Yes ☐

No ☐

6. If your answer in question 5 above is yes, give reasons for your absence from school on some days? .....

.....

7. If your answer to question 5 above is no, what factors make you able to be in school everyday?

.....

.....

8. Have you ever arrived late at your school?

Yes ☐

No ☐

9. If your answer in question 8 above is yes, give reasons for your late arrival at school.

.....

.....

10. If your answer in question 8 above is no, what factors make you able to arrive early at school?





2. At what time of the day do you teach your subject in your class?

- (i) Morning hours ☐ (ii) Mid morning hours ☐  
 (iii) Afternoon hours ☐ (iv) Others (Specify) ☐

3. On average, how many students arrive late for your lesson in your class per week?

.....

4. What is the approximate distance travelled by your student who stays nearest to the school?

- (i) 0 – 2 Km ☐ (ii) 3 – 5 Km ☐ (iii) Above 5 Km ☐ (iv) I am not aware ☐

5. What is the approximate distance travelled by your student who stays farthest from school?

- (i) 0 – 2 Km ☐ (ii) 3 – 5 Km ☐ (iii) Above 5 Km ☐ (iv) I am not aware ☐

6. Approximately what time does your student who stays nearest to school take to move from his/her residential place to school?

- (i) 0 – 45 minutes ☐ (ii) About 45 to 60 minutes ☐  
 (ii) More than 60 minutes ☐ (iv) I am not aware ☐

7. Approximately what time does your student who stays farthest from school take to move from his/her residential place to school?

- (i) 0 – 45 minutes ☐ (ii) About 45 to 60 minutes ☐  
 (iii) More than 60 minutes ☐ (iv) I am not aware ☐

### Part 3: Factors affecting students' attendance in secondary schools

8. Do some of your students absent themselves from attending classes on some days?

Yes ☐ No ☐

9. If your answer in question 8 above is yes, on average how many of your students become absent from your class each week?

.....

10. What reasons (in your own opinion) do you think make some of your students absent from school sometimes?

.....

.....

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11. Do some of your students arrive late at school on some days?

Yes ☐ No ☐

12. If your answer in question 11 above is yes, on average how many of your students become late at school each week?

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13. What reasons (in your own opinion) do you think make some of your students arrive late at school sometimes?

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#### **Part 4: Measures used by schools to improve students' attendance**

14. What measures does the school use to control students' absenteeism?

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15. What measures does the school use to control students' late arrival at school?

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### Appendix III: Head-teacher's interview guide

#### Introduction

Dear Respondent,

This interview guide is for Masters study on *School accessibility and students attendance in secondary schools in Kasere district*. You have been selected to participate in this study as a respondent. The purpose of this interview is to generate information regarding school accessibility and students attendance in your school. You are kindly requested to freely participate in the interview and provide information as honestly as possible. Your responses to the items below shall contribute greatly to the success of this study. The information you give will be treated confidentially and shall specifically be used for study purposes only.

#### Part 1: Basic Information

- (i) Name of school.....
- (ii) School location: Urban ☐ Peri-urban ☐ Rural ☐
- (iii) Nature of school: Private ☐ Public (Gov't-Aided) ☐ Non-public ☐
- Day school ☐ Boarding school ☐

#### Part 2: School Accessibility and factors affecting students' attendance in secondary schools

1. What is the total student enrolment in your school?
2. Do some of your students absent themselves from school sometimes?
3. If yes, on average how many students become absent per week?

4. What reasons (in your own opinion) make students absent from school sometimes?
5. Do some of your students arrive late sometimes?
6. If yes, on average how many students become late per week?
7. What reasons (in your own opinion) make some students arrive late at school?
8. What is the approximate distance travelled by the student whose residential place is nearest to the school?
9. Approximately what time does the student in (8) above take to get to school?
10. What is the approximate distance travelled by the student whose residential place is farthest from this school?
11. Approximately what time does the student in (10) above take to get to school?
12. What are the various means of transport used by your students to come to school?

**Part 3: Measures used by schools to improve students' attendance**

13. What measures do you use as a school administrator to control students' absenteeism?
14. What measures do you use as a school administrator to control students' late arrival?

**Thank you**

