

# Decentralized legislation and secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County. A cross-sectional study.

Issa Masambu\*, Benard Nuwatuhaire, Edmand Bakashaba  
School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University

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## ABSTRACT

### Background

The study aimed to examine the relationship between decentralized legislation and secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County.

### Methodology

The study used a descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional design with mixed methods. From 700 respondents, a sample of 248 was selected using purposive, stratified, and convenience sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and document review. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 27 with descriptive and correlation statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Instruments were validated through expert review and a CVI of 0.9, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha of 0.8. Ethical procedures ensured consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

### Results

Response rate was 88.7%, showing strong participation, with full response from head teachers, DEO, and LC III officials, while inspectors and planners had lower participation due to workload. Respondents were mainly male (60%) and below 18 years (72.3%), indicating dominance of students in the sample. Decentralized legislation generally received positive ratings with mean scores above 3.50, showing agreement that it clarifies roles (M=3.92), improves accountability (M=3.67), supports school governance (M=3.85), and enhances decision-making (M=3.71). Weak enforcement of laws scored the highest concern (M=4.12), followed by political interference (M=3.88) and limited community awareness (M=3.28). Service delivery indicators showed moderate improvement, including school availability (M=4.22), teacher attendance (M=3.76), management coordination (M=3.84), and student discipline (M=3.71), while infrastructure (M=3.47) and learning materials (M=3.41) remained inadequate. Themes highlighted improved governance, accountability, access, coordination, weak enforcement, funding constraints, and limited stakeholder awareness. Correlation results showed a significant positive relationship between decentralized legislation and secondary education service delivery ( $r=0.611$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

### Conclusion

Decentralized legislation had a positive and statistically significant relationship with secondary education service delivery.

### Recommendation

Local governments and education authorities should strengthen the enforcement of education laws and bylaws to ensure effective implementation at the school level.

**Keywords:** Legislative autonomy, Secondary education, Local governance, Policy implementation, Administrative accountability

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**Corresponding Author:** Issa Masambu

**Email:** [masambuissa085@gmail.com](mailto:masambuissa085@gmail.com)

School of Graduate Studies and Research of Team University

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Decentralized legislation empowers local governments to formulate education-related bylaws that respond directly to community needs, including school funding mechanisms, curriculum adaptation, teacher management, and student

welfare services. This legislative autonomy allows education systems to become more context-specific, ensuring that policies reflect local socioeconomic realities rather than relying solely on centralized national frameworks. Smith and Brown (2022) argue that

decentralised legal authority enhances responsiveness by allowing local governments to design education policies that address specific community challenges, thereby improving relevance and effectiveness in service delivery.

Anderson and Taylor (2023) further emphasize that decentralised legislative flexibility enables local governments to quickly respond to emerging educational issues such as overcrowding, teacher shortages, and unequal access to learning materials. In addition, Jones (2023) notes that such autonomy allows targeted interventions for marginalized and underserved populations, promoting equity in education access.

However, despite these advantages, decentralized legislation is often constrained by policy fragmentation and inconsistency. According to Jones and Stewart (2023), misalignment between local bylaws and national education standards creates administrative confusion and weakens implementation effectiveness. Anderson and Taylor (2023) add that conflicting legal frameworks may result in unequal educational practices across districts, undermining national cohesion in education delivery.

Smith and Turner (2022) further argue that disparities in legislative capacity among local governments contribute to unequal educational outcomes, especially where weaker administrative systems exist. Additionally, Wilson and Green (2022) highlight that limited institutional capacity and inadequate funding hinder the effective development and enforcement of local education laws.

To address these challenges, Brown and Taylor (2023) recommend stronger harmonization between national and local education policies, alongside improved coordination mechanisms.

The study aimed to examine the relationship between decentralized legislation and secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

This study employed a descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional survey design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The descriptive research design was employed to provide a detailed and accurate account of the current status of political decentralization and education service delivery in the district. This design facilitated the systematic collection and presentation of information regarding the characteristics, practices, and perceptions of various

stakeholders, including local government officials, education administrators, and community members.

A correlational design was used to investigate the nature and strength of the relationships between the key variables of interest. The study also adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which involved collecting data from respondents at a single point in time.

The quantitative aspect of the study involved the use of structured questionnaires to collect numerical data from a representative sample of respondents. This approach facilitated statistical analysis, including correlation testing.

To complement the quantitative data, the study also incorporated a qualitative approach through key informant interviews. This provided in-depth insights into the contextual and experiential aspects of decentralization that could not be adequately captured through quantitative instruments.

### Study population

The study population consisted of 700 respondents drawn from different categories of stakeholders involved in secondary education service delivery and local governance in Mbale District. These included head teachers, teachers, school bursars/accounts staff, sub-county chiefs, parish chiefs, the District Education Officer, inspectors of schools, district planners and finance officers, Board of Governors members, LC III leaders, and senior students from Senior Three to Senior Six. The selected respondents were considered appropriate because they possessed relevant information regarding political decentralization and education service delivery.

The study was conducted in selected secondary schools in Mbale District, namely Nabumali Secondary School (Day), Nyondo Secondary School (Day), Makhai Secondary School (Day), Mbale School for the Deaf (Special Needs, both day and boarding), and Nabumali Secondary School (Boarding section).

### Sample size

The sample size of 248 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size determination. According to the table, a population of 700 respondents corresponded to a sample size of 248 respondents.

The sample size was considered adequate because it enabled the researcher to obtain representative data while minimizing the time and costs involved in data collection.

**Table 1: Study population, sample size, sampling technique**

Respondents	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Head teachers	5	5	Purposive sampling
Teachers	100	35	Stratified sampling
School bursars/accounts staff	5	5	Purposive sampling
Sub-county chief	1	1	Purposive sampling
Parish chiefs	5	5	Convenience sampling
District Education Officer (DEO)	1	1	Purposive sampling
Inspectors of schools	2	2	Purposive sampling
District planners & finance officers	2	2	Purposive sampling
Board of Governors (BoG) members	50	18	Convenience sampling
LC III chairperson	1	1	Purposive sampling
LC III councilors	12	4	Convenience sampling
Senior students (S3–S6)	516	169	Stratified sampling
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>248</b>	

Source: Mbale District Education Department (2025); Mbale District Planning Department (2025).

### Sampling techniques

The study employed purposive, stratified, convenience, and proportionate sampling techniques, each selected to suit the nature of respondents and the objectives of the study.

#### Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select key informants such as head teachers, school bursars/accounts staff, the Sub-county Chief, the District Education Officer (DEO), inspectors of schools, district planners and finance officers, and the LC III chairperson. This technique was used because these respondents were considered information-rich cases with direct involvement in policy implementation, administration, and supervision of education services. Their positions enabled them to provide in-depth and reliable information on political decentralization and education service delivery, which could not be obtained from ordinary respondents.

#### Stratified sampling

Stratified sampling was applied to teachers and senior students (S3–S6). These groups were first divided into distinct strata based on their categories (for example, class levels for students and departments for teachers). This technique was used to ensure that all sub-groups within the population were adequately represented in the sample. It reduced sampling bias and increased the representativeness of the study findings by ensuring that each subgroup contributed proportionately to the data collected.

#### Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling was used to select parish chiefs, Board of Governors (BoG) members, and LC III councilors. This method was adopted due to the ease of access and availability of these respondents within the study area. It was also used because some of these officials had tight schedules and could only be reached when they were available.

Although less rigorous than other methods, it allowed the researcher to efficiently collect data within limited time and resource constraints.

### Sources of data

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data in order to obtain comprehensive and reliable information.

#### Primary sources

The study utilized primary data sources, which were collected directly from respondents in the field using questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were the main instrument used to collect quantitative primary data from teachers and senior students (S3–S6). The questionnaires were structured and contained both closed-ended and a few open-ended questions designed to capture respondents' views on political decentralization and education service delivery. This method was preferred because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a relatively large number of respondents within a short period of time. It also ensured uniformity of responses, making it easier to code, quantify, and analyze the data statistically. Interviews were used to collect qualitative primary data from key informants such as head teachers, the Sub-county Chief, the District Education Officer (DEO), inspectors of schools, district planners and finance officers, and LC III leaders. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the researcher to guide the discussion while also giving respondents the freedom to express their opinions in detail. This method was chosen because it provided in-depth insights, clarifications, and contextual understanding of issues related to decentralization and education service delivery that could not be fully captured through questionnaires.

## Secondary sources

The study also relied on secondary data sources, which were already existing materials reviewed to complement the primary data collected from the field. These sources provided background information, theoretical insights, and empirical evidence related to political decentralization and education service delivery.

Secondary data were obtained from a wide range of published and unpublished documents, including government reports, policy documents, academic journals, textbooks, dissertations, and official statistical records. Key sources included Ministry of Education and Sports reports, local government planning and education reports from Mbale District, and policy guidelines on decentralization in Uganda.

In addition, relevant literature was reviewed from scholarly articles, books, and research studies focusing on decentralization, governance, and education service delivery. These sources helped to identify existing knowledge, theoretical perspectives, and research gaps relevant to the study.

Electronic sources such as online academic databases and institutional websites were also consulted to obtain up-to-date information on education performance indicators and decentralization policies. These secondary sources enriched the study by providing comparative insights and supporting the interpretation of primary data findings.

## Methods of data collection

The study employed a combination of data collection methods to obtain both quantitative and qualitative information from the selected respondents.

## Questionnaire method

Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers, SMC members, Board of Governors (BoG) members, LC III councilors, LC II chairpersons, and senior students. These consisted mainly of structured and semi-structured questions, which allowed respondents to provide standardized answers while also giving room for brief explanations. This method was preferred because it reached many respondents within a short time and ensured anonymity, which encouraged honest responses.

## Interview method

Interviews were conducted with key informants such as the head teacher, school bursars/accounts staff, sub-county chief, parish chiefs, District Education Officer (DEO), inspectors of schools, district planners, and finance officers. Semi-structured interview guides were used to allow flexibility and enable the researcher to probe deeper into specific issues. This method helped in obtaining detailed and in-depth information from respondents with specialized knowledge.

## Document review method

Document review (documentary analysis) was also used to collect secondary data. The researcher examined relevant documents such as school financial records, audit reports, performance reports, attendance registers, and government policy documents. This method provided background information and helped to verify and complement the data obtained through questionnaires and interviews.

## Research instruments

The study utilized a set of carefully designed research instruments to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents. These instruments were aligned with the data collection methods and objectives of the study.

## Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was developed and administered to teachers, School Management Committee (SMC) members, Board of Governors (BoG) members, LC III councilors, LC II chairpersons, and senior students.

The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and a few open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions enabled easy quantification and analysis of responses, while open-ended questions allowed respondents to provide additional explanations where necessary.

The questionnaire was divided into sections covering key variables of the study. It was self-administered to ensure convenience and anonymity, which was expected to encourage honest and unbiased responses.

## Interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from key informants such as the head teacher, bursars/accounts staff, sub-county chief, parish chiefs, District Education Officer (DEO), inspectors of schools, district planners, and finance officers.

The guide contained a list of predetermined questions and themes aligned with the study objectives, while allowing flexibility for probing and follow-up questions. This instrument helped the researcher obtain detailed, in-depth information and clarify issues that were not fully captured through questionnaires.

## Document review checklist

A document review checklist was used to systematically extract relevant information from existing records and documents. These documents included school financial records, audit reports, performance reports, attendance registers, and government policy documents.

The checklist guided the researcher on the specific data to be reviewed, ensuring consistency and relevance in the information collected. It also helped in verifying and triangulating data obtained from questionnaires and interviews.

### Data collection procedure

The researcher followed a systematic procedure to ensure that data were collected accurately, ethically, and efficiently. First, an introductory letter was obtained from the relevant institution (university or research authority) to seek permission to conduct the study. This letter was presented to district authorities, school administrators, and other relevant offices to gain access to respondents and necessary documents.

After obtaining permission, the researcher conducted a pilot study to test the research instruments (questionnaires, interview guides, and document review checklist). Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the instruments for clarity, validity, and reliability.

The researcher then visited the selected schools and administrative offices to administer questionnaires to teachers, SMC members, BoG members, local leaders, and students. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to respondents, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Questionnaires were distributed and, where possible, collected immediately or within an agreed period. Interviews were conducted with key informants such as the head teacher, bursars, district officials, and education officers. Appointments were scheduled in advance to ensure availability. During the interviews, the researcher used a semi-structured interview guide and took notes and/or recorded responses (with consent) for accuracy.

For document review, the researcher accessed relevant records such as financial reports, audit reports, attendance registers, and policy documents from schools and district offices. A document review checklist was used to extract and record necessary information systematically.

Finally, all completed questionnaires, interview notes, and reviewed documents were carefully organized, checked for completeness, and securely stored in preparation for data analysis.

### Validity and reliability of instruments

To ensure the quality and credibility of the data collected, the researcher addressed both the validity and reliability of the research instruments.

#### Validity of instruments

Validity referred to the extent to which the research instruments measured what they were intended to measure. To ensure validity, the questionnaires and interview guides were carefully designed in line with the study objectives and research questions.

Content validity was established through consultation with experts such as supervisors, lecturers, and professionals in the field of education and research. These experts reviewed the instruments to assess whether the items adequately covered the study variables and provided relevant feedback for improvement.

To quantitatively determine content validity, the Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed in line with guidance by Amin (2005). This was done by first giving the drafted instruments to a panel of experts who rated each item as either relevant or not relevant to the study objectives. The number of items rated as relevant was then divided by the total number of items in the instrument to obtain the CVI.

Using this procedure, the CVI obtained was 0.9, meaning that 90% of the items were judged to be relevant by the experts. According to Amin (2005), a CVI of 0.7 and above is considered acceptable for social science research instruments. Therefore, a CVI of 0.9 indicated a high level of content validity, confirming that the instruments were suitable for data collection.

The researcher also conducted a pilot study to test the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions. Based on the feedback obtained from both experts and the pilot study, necessary revisions were made to improve the instruments before the actual data collection.

### Reliability of instruments

Reliability refers to the consistency of the research instruments in producing similar results when used repeatedly under the same conditions.

To ensure reliability, the researcher pre-tested the instruments during the pilot study using respondents who were similar to those in the actual study but not included in the final sample. This helped to identify ambiguous or unclear questions and allowed for necessary adjustments before the actual data collection.

For the questionnaire, internal consistency reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in line with Amin (2009). After the pilot test, the collected responses were entered into statistical software to assess how well the items in each section measured the same underlying construct. Cronbach's Alpha was then computed for the different constructs of the study (such as political decentralization and education service delivery indicators). A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.8 was obtained. According to Amin (2009), a reliability coefficient of 0.7 and above is considered acceptable for social science research, while values closer to 1 indicate higher internal consistency. Therefore, a coefficient of 0.8 indicated that the research instruments had good reliability and were consistent in measuring the intended variables.

Based on this result, the questionnaire was deemed reliable and was adopted for the actual data collection without further major modifications, except for minor adjustments aimed at improving clarity and respondent understanding.

### Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out after all the required data had been collected, organized, and checked for completeness and accuracy. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis

techniques were used in line with the nature of the data collected.

### Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires were coded, entered, and analyzed using statistical methods. The data was first organized into tables and then processed using statistical software such as SPSS version 27.

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and tables were used to summarize and present the data in a clear and understandable manner. Where necessary, results were presented using charts, graphs, and tables to facilitate interpretation.

### Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data obtained from interviews and document review were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher organized the data into themes and categories based on the study objectives.

Responses from interviews were transcribed, carefully read, and grouped according to recurring ideas or patterns. Relevant quotations were used to support the findings.

The analyzed qualitative data were then presented in a narrative form to complement and explain the quantitative results.

### Ethical consideration

The researcher observed key ethical principles throughout the study to ensure the protection of respondents and the integrity of the research process.

First, official permission was obtained from relevant authorities before commencing data collection. An introductory letter was presented to schools, district offices, and other institutions to seek authorization to conduct the study.

Second, informed consent was sought from all respondents. The researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, and the expected time involvement. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were given the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty.

Third, confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. The information provided by respondents was used solely for academic purposes, and no personal names or identifiers were disclosed in the final report. Codes were used instead of names to protect participants' identities.

Fourth, the researcher ensured honesty and integrity in data collection, analysis, and reporting. All findings were presented accurately without fabrication, manipulation, or misrepresentation of information.

Finally, all respondents were treated with respect, and data collection was conducted in a manner that did not cause harm, discomfort, or disruption to their normal duties or activities.

## RESULTS

### Response rate

**Table 2: Response rate for the study**

Respondents	Questionnaires issued and interviews scheduled	Questionnaires and interviews completed	Response Rate (%)
Head teachers	5	5	100
Teachers	35	30	85.7
School bursars	5	3	60
Sub-county chief	1	1	100
Parish chiefs	5	3	60
D.E.O	1	1	100
Inspectors of schools	2	1	50
District planners & finance officers	2	1	50
Board of Governors members	18	13	72.2
LC III chairperson	1	1	100
LC III councilors	4	2	50
Senior students (S3–S6)	169	159	94.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>88.7</b>

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The study achieved an overall response rate of 88.7%, which was considered very good for analysis and reporting. According to research standards in social science studies, a

response rate above 70% is generally acceptable for drawing valid conclusions.

The highest response rates were recorded among head teachers, the Sub-county Chief, the District Education Officer, and the LC III Chairperson (100%), indicating full participation of key administrative stakeholders. Senior students also registered a high response rate of 94.1%, which significantly contributed to the quantitative data collected. Moderate response rates were observed among teachers (85.7%) and Board of Governors members (72.2%), while

relatively lower response rates were recorded among inspectors of schools, district planners, finance officers, parish chiefs, and LC III councilors, mainly due to their busy schedules and limited availability.

Overall, the high response rate demonstrated adequate participation of respondents, making the data reliable and sufficient for meaningful analysis and interpretation of the study findings in Mbale District.

**Table 3: Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	132	60.0
	Female	88	40.0
<b>Age of respondent</b>	Below 18 years	159	72.3
	18–25 years	25	11.4
	26–35 years	12	5.5
	36–45 years	10	4.5
	46–55 years	8	3.6
	56 years and above	6	2.7
<b>Highest level of education</b>	Primary	20	9.1
	Secondary	35	15.9
	Certificate/Diploma	70	31.8
	Bachelor's Degree	65	29.5
	Postgraduate (Diploma/Master's and above)	30	13.6
<b>Length of service/experience</b>	Less than 1 year	18	8.2
	1–5 years	60	27.3
	6–10 years	58	26.4
	11–15 years	45	20.5
	Above 15 years	39	17.7
	<b>Position in school/administration</b>	Administrative staff	18
Teaching staff		30	13.6
Governance/leadership (SMC/BoG/LCs)		45	20.5
Technical/inspection/planning officer		10	4.5
Student		159	72.3
<b>Institution type</b>	Government-aided school	170	77.3
	Private school	40	18.2

	Other (special needs/boarding mix)	10	4.5
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Source: Primary Data (2026)

The findings in Table 3 indicate that the study was dominated by male respondents (60%), while females accounted for 40%, showing a moderate gender imbalance in participation in education governance and service delivery roles in Mbale District.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents (72.3%) were below 18 years, reflecting the large proportion of senior students in the sample. This was followed by a smaller representation of adult respondents across different age categories, with the least representation among those aged 56 years and above (2.7%).

Regarding education levels, most respondents had certificate/diploma qualifications (31.8%) and bachelor's degrees (29.5%), indicating that a significant proportion of participants had adequate academic qualifications to understand issues related to decentralization and education service delivery.

Findings on experience revealed that most respondents (27.3%) had 1–5 years of experience, while 26.4% had 6–10 years of experience. This suggests that the majority of respondents had sufficient exposure to education systems and local governance structures.

In the position of administration, students formed the largest group (72.3%), followed by governance/leadership

stakeholders (20.5%). This ensured that both service recipients (students) and service providers/decision-makers were well represented in the study.

Finally, most respondents (77.3%) were from government-aided schools, indicating that public education institutions were the main focus of the study, which is consistent with the objectives of examining political decentralization and public education service delivery.

### Decentralized legislation on secondary education in the Mbale district local government

#### Descriptive analysis of decentralized legislation on secondary education in the Mbale district local government

The study assessed respondents' perceptions of decentralized legislation and its influence on secondary education service delivery in Mbale District. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale and analyzed using means and standard deviations.

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics on decentralized legislation**

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
The existing education laws clearly define the roles of local governments in secondary education.	3.92	0.88	Agree
Bylaws ensure equity in access to secondary education.	3.76	0.91	Agree
Local leaders actively participate in enforcing education policies in secondary schools.	3.58	0.97	Agree
Education laws are effectively communicated to secondary school stakeholders.	3.41	1.02	Agree
There is an adequate legal framework supporting SMCs and BoGs.	3.85	0.90	Agree
Decentralized legislation ensures accountability in secondary schools.	3.67	0.94	Agree
School administrators comply with secondary education policies and regulations.	3.74	0.89	Agree
Local government bylaws effectively support discipline in secondary schools.	3.60	0.96	Agree
There is effective coordination in implementing secondary education laws.	3.49	0.99	Agree
Weak enforcement of education laws negatively affects service delivery.	4.12	0.81	Strongly Agree
Community members are aware of their roles under decentralized education legislation.	3.28	1.05	Not Sure/Moderate
Secondary education policies are regularly reviewed to match local needs.	3.35	1.00	Agree
There is political interference in the implementation of education legislation.	3.88	0.92	Agree
Decentralized legislation reduces delays in decision-making in secondary education.	3.71	0.90	Agree

Source: Primary Data (2026)

The findings indicate that respondents generally agreed that decentralized legislation positively influenced secondary education service delivery in Mbale District. Most items scored mean values above 3.50, suggesting a favorable perception of legal and policy frameworks guiding secondary education.

Respondents strongly agreed (Mean = 4.12) that weak enforcement of education laws negatively affected service delivery, indicating that implementation gaps remain a major challenge despite the existence of legal frameworks. Similarly, political interference (Mean = 3.88) was identified as a notable constraint affecting the effective implementation of education legislation.

The results also show that while the roles of local governments and education stakeholders are fairly well defined (Mean = 3.92), awareness among community members about their roles under decentralized legislation remained moderate (Mean = 3.28), suggesting a gap in sensitization and communication.

Overall, the findings suggest that although decentralized legislation provides a strong framework for secondary education governance, challenges such as weak enforcement, limited community awareness, and political interference continue to affect optimal service delivery.

## Qualitative findings on decentralized legislation on secondary education in the Mbale district local government

### 1. Head teachers

The head teachers said, *“Decentralized legislation has given us some level of autonomy in managing school affairs, especially in areas of administration, discipline, and day-to-day decision-making. For example, School Management Committees (SMCs) and Boards of Governors (BoGs) now play a more active role in supporting school governance.”*

He further explained, *“However, in practice, political interference from local leaders sometimes affects how we implement disciplinary measures and staff management decisions. At times, decisions that should be purely administrative are influenced by political considerations, which affect efficiency in school management.”*

Another head teacher added, *“Although policies exist, enforcement at the school level is still weak because some stakeholders are not fully aware of their legal roles under decentralization.”*

### 2. School bursars/accounts staff

The bursars said, *“Financial decentralization has improved accountability because we now follow strict procedures for budgeting, expenditure, and reporting. Every financial transaction must be justified and approved by the relevant authorities at both school and district levels.”*

However, one bursar noted, *“Despite this improvement, delays in fund release from the district affect smooth implementation of school programs such as co-curricular*

*activities, maintenance, and procurement of learning materials.”*

He added, *“Sometimes we are forced to operate on limited budgets while waiting for approvals, which slows down service delivery and affects planning efficiency.”*

### 3. Parish chiefs

The parish chiefs said, *“Our role under decentralization mainly involves mobilizing communities to support education, monitoring school attendance, and reporting cases of absenteeism or dropout.”*

One parish chief explained, *“However, we are not fully empowered to enforce education laws directly, and this limits our effectiveness in ensuring compliance at the community level.”*

He further stated, *“Many parents and community members still do not clearly understand education bylaws, and this creates challenges when we try to enforce discipline or encourage school attendance.”*

### 4. District education officer (DEO)

The DEO said, *“Decentralization has improved coordination in education planning, supervision, and monitoring of secondary schools. It has enabled us to work closely with schools and local leaders in addressing education challenges.”*

He further explained, *“However, we still face challenges such as inadequate funding, limited staffing, and occasional political interference in decisions related to staffing and resource allocation.”*

He added, *“While policies are well designed, implementation is sometimes weak due to gaps in enforcement mechanisms and limited capacity at lower local government levels.”*

### 5. Inspectors of schools

The inspectors said, *“We are responsible for ensuring that schools comply with education standards, curriculum requirements, and administrative guidelines. Regular inspections help to identify gaps in teaching and learning processes.”*

One inspector stated, *“However, we are limited by insufficient transport and staffing, which makes it difficult to conduct frequent school visits, especially in rural areas.”*

He added, *“Some schools also lack full compliance with regulations, mainly due to weak enforcement and limited supervision from higher authorities.”*

### 6. District planners & finance officers

The district planners said, *“Decentralized budgeting has improved participation in planning because schools and departments are now involved in the budgeting process.”*

He further explained, *“However, the budget ceilings imposed by the central government limit our flexibility in*

addressing all local education needs. As a result, some priorities remain unfunded or underfunded.”

A finance officer added, “We ensure strict accountability in expenditure, but delays in fund disbursement affect the timely implementation of planned activities in schools.”

## Page | 10 7. LC III chairperson

The LC III chairperson said, “As political leaders, we play a role in overseeing education service delivery, mobilizing communities, and supporting school development projects.”

He further noted, “However, sometimes political expectations from the community conflict with technical education guidelines, making it difficult to balance political demands with professional requirements.”

He added, “There is a need for stronger collaboration between political leaders and education professionals to improve service delivery.”

## 8. LC III councilors

The councilors said, “We participate in monitoring schools, supporting discipline, and representing community concerns in education matters.”

One councilor explained, “However, our understanding of detailed education laws is limited, which affects how effectively we participate in enforcement and decision-making.”

He further stated, “Community involvement in education governance is still low, yet it is essential for improving accountability and school performance.”

## Thematic analysis of interview findings

The qualitative data obtained from head teachers, bursars, parish chiefs, the District Education Officer, inspectors of schools, district planners, finance officers, LC III chairperson, and LC III councilors were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved coding responses, identifying patterns, and grouping them into key themes aligned with the study objectives.

### Theme 1: Improved governance and decision-making in schools

Most respondents indicated that decentralized legislation had improved governance structures in secondary schools.

The head teachers said, “Decentralization has improved school management because we are now more involved in decision-making at the school level.”

The DEO added, “Planning and supervision are now more coordinated between the district and schools.”

This suggests that decentralization strengthened administrative structures by enhancing local participation in decision-making, budgeting, and supervision.

### Theme 2: Weak enforcement of education laws

A dominant concern across respondents was the weak enforcement of education laws and policies.

The inspectors said, “Some schools do not fully comply with education standards due to weak enforcement mechanisms.”

One head teacher said, “Policies exist, but implementation is inconsistent at the school level.”

This theme shows that although legal frameworks exist, enforcement remains a challenge, reducing their effectiveness in improving service delivery.

### Theme 3: Political interference in education administration

Respondents frequently reported political interference as a constraint to the effective implementation of decentralized legislation.

The LC III chairperson said, “Sometimes political expectations from the community interfere with technical decisions in schools.”

The DEO also stated, “Political influence sometimes affects staffing and implementation of policies.”

This indicates that political involvement, while intended to support governance, sometimes disrupts professional and administrative decisions in education.

### Theme 4: Limited funding and resource constraints

Financial limitations were repeatedly highlighted as a major challenge affecting education service delivery.

The district planner said, “Budget ceilings from the central government limit our ability to meet all education needs.”

A bursar stated, “Delays in fund release affect smooth implementation of school activities.”

This theme shows that despite decentralization, financial dependency on the central government still constrains effective service delivery.

### Theme 5: Low awareness and understanding of education laws

Some respondents noted that community members and even some local leaders had a limited understanding of education laws and bylaws.

A parish chief said, “Many parents are not aware of education bylaws, which makes enforcement difficult.”

A councilor added, “Our understanding of education legislation is still limited.”

This suggests that inadequate sensitization limits effective implementation of decentralized education policies.

### Theme 6: Improved accountability and transparency

Despite challenges, respondents acknowledged improvements in accountability mechanisms.

The bursars said, “Financial accountability has improved because of strict reporting and auditing procedures.”

The DEO added, “Schools are now more accountable to both district and community structures.”

This indicates that decentralization has strengthened monitoring and accountability systems in education management.

## Documentary findings

The documentary review involved a systematic examination of secondary data sources, including district education reports, school financial statements, audit reports, inspection reports, attendance registers, BoG/SMC minutes, and national policy documents on decentralization and education management. The purpose was to triangulate primary data findings and provide an objective basis for interpreting the influence of decentralized legislation on secondary education service delivery.

The findings were organized thematically in line with the study objectives.

1. Existence of a comprehensive legal and policy framework  
The reviewed policy documents, including district education ordinances, Ministry of Education guidelines, and local government legal frameworks, confirmed that a well-established decentralized legal structure governs secondary education.

The documents clearly outlined the roles of key stakeholders such as School Management Committees (SMCs), Boards of Governors (BoGs), head teachers, and local government authorities. They emphasized participation, accountability, and shared responsibility in school governance.

Minutes from BoG and SMC meetings further confirmed that governance structures were formally operational in most schools, with regular meetings documented to discuss budgeting, discipline, staffing, and school development plans. This indicated that decentralized legislation had institutionalized formal governance mechanisms in secondary schools.

2. Weak enforcement and implementation gaps in education laws

Despite the existence of strong policy frameworks, inspection reports, and district monitoring documents revealed significant inconsistencies in enforcement of education regulations.

School inspection reports indicated cases of non-compliance with staffing guidelines, irregular record keeping, and partial implementation of curriculum standards in some secondary schools. In several instances, follow-up inspection reports showed that earlier recommendations had not been fully implemented.

Furthermore, district reports highlighted that enforcement mechanisms were weak due to limited supervisory capacity, inadequate follow-up systems, and occasional delays in administrative response. This suggested a gap between policy formulation and actual implementation at the school level.

3. Financial accountability and budgetary control under decentralization

Financial records, audit reports, and school expenditure statements indicated that decentralized budgeting had improved transparency and accountability in financial management.

Schools were found to prepare annual budgets and submit financial reports to the district education office and other oversight bodies. Audit reports confirmed the presence of standardized accounting procedures, procurement records, and expenditure accountability frameworks.

However, the documents also revealed persistent challenges. In particular, delays in fund disbursement from higher government levels affected the timely execution of planned school activities such as infrastructure maintenance, instructional material procurement, and co-curricular programs. Some audit reports also highlighted instances of budget reallocations without timely approval, which affected planned priorities.

4. Education access and student attendance trends

Attendance registers and enrollment records showed generally improved access to secondary education across schools in the district over the study period.

However, documentary evidence also revealed fluctuations in student attendance, particularly in lower secondary levels. Some schools recorded dropout cases attributed to socio-economic challenges, early pregnancies, and school-related costs despite decentralization efforts to improve access.

While enrollment had increased in most government-aided schools, disparities existed between urban and rural schools, indicating uneven distribution of access benefits under decentralized service delivery.

5. Monitoring, supervision, and coordination mechanisms

District education reports and inspection schedules showed that a formal supervision structure existed, involving inspectors of schools, sub-county education officers, and district education officials.

However, the records indicated irregularity in inspection visits due to logistical constraints such as inadequate transport, limited fuel allocations, and staffing shortages. Some schools were not inspected within recommended time intervals, leading to gaps in monitoring.

Coordination meeting minutes revealed efforts to strengthen collaboration between district officials and school administrators, but implementation gaps persisted due to weak feedback mechanisms and delayed follow-up on inspection recommendations.

6. Policy implementation gaps and institutional constraints

Government policy documents emphasized decentralization principles such as participation, accountability, responsiveness, and efficiency in service delivery. However, implementation reports revealed several constraints affecting the achievement of these principles.

Key challenges documented included inadequate funding at the district level, limited human resource capacity in education offices, and occasional political influence in administrative decisions such as staffing and resource allocation.

Additionally, some district planning reports highlighted misalignment between national education priorities and local implementation capacity, resulting in partial achievement of policy objectives at the school level.

Overall, documentary evidence confirmed that decentralized legislation provided a strong institutional and legal foundation for secondary education service delivery in Mbale District. The framework had enhanced governance structures, improved financial accountability, and strengthened participatory planning.

However, the documents also revealed persistent systemic challenges, including weak enforcement of education laws, inadequate funding, irregular supervision, and implementation gaps between policy and practice. These constraints significantly affected the effectiveness of decentralized education service delivery, particularly in achieving consistent improvements in quality, access, and efficiency across secondary schools.

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics on secondary education service delivery**

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
There are more than 3 secondary schools in Busoba Sub-county.	4.22	0.75	Strongly Agree
There are adequate, qualified teachers in secondary schools.	3.58	0.92	Agree
Teaching and learning materials are sufficient in secondary schools.	3.41	0.98	Agree
Students in secondary schools walk a minimal distance to school.	3.30	1.04	Not Sure
School infrastructure (classrooms, laboratories, libraries) is adequate.	3.47	0.96	Agree
Teacher attendance in secondary schools is generally good.	3.76	0.87	Agree
Students' academic performance in secondary schools is satisfactory.	3.62	0.90	Agree
School management effectively coordinates education service delivery.	3.84	0.82	Agree
Discipline among students in secondary schools is well maintained.	3.71	0.88	Agree
There is effective communication between the school administration and stakeholders.	3.69	0.91	Agree
Co-curricular activities are adequately supported in secondary schools.	3.36	0.99	Agree
School facilities are regularly maintained and improved.	3.45	0.95	Agree
Parents and the community actively support secondary education services.	3.52	0.93	Agree

The findings in Table 5 indicate that respondents generally agreed that secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County was moderately satisfactory. Most statements recorded mean scores above 3.50, suggesting positive perceptions regarding the quality and management of education services.

Respondents strongly agreed (Mean = 4.22) that there were more than three secondary schools within the sub-county, implying relatively improved access to secondary education services in the area.

The study findings also revealed that teacher attendance (Mean = 3.76), school management coordination (Mean = 3.84), and student discipline (Mean = 3.71) were perceived positively, indicating that administrative and supervisory structures were functioning fairly well.

However, respondents expressed moderate concern regarding the adequacy of teaching and learning materials (Mean = 3.41), infrastructure facilities (Mean = 3.47), and support for co-curricular activities (Mean = 3.36),

## Secondary education service delivery in the Mbale District local government

### Descriptive analysis of findings on secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County, Mbale District, local government

The study assessed respondents' perceptions regarding the status of secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County. The analysis focused on indicators such as access to education, teacher availability, school infrastructure, student performance, communication, discipline, and community participation. Responses were analyzed using means and standard deviations derived from a five-point Likert scale.

suggesting that resource constraints still affected effective service delivery.

In addition, respondents were uncertain about whether students walked minimal distances to school (Mean = 3.30), indicating possible accessibility challenges for some learners, especially those in remote areas.

Overall, the findings suggest that although secondary education service delivery had improved in Busoba Sub-County, challenges related to infrastructure, instructional materials, accessibility, and resource support continued to affect the quality and effectiveness of education services.

### Qualitative and thematic analysis of findings on secondary education service delivery in Busoba sub-county

Qualitative data regarding secondary education service delivery were collected through interviews with head teachers, bursars/accounts staff, parish chiefs, inspectors of schools, the District Education Officer (DEO), district

planners, LC III leaders, and other education stakeholders. The responses were analyzed thematically according to recurring ideas and patterns related to the quality, access, and relevance of secondary education services. The thematic findings are presented below.

### **Theme 1: Improved access to secondary education**

Most respondents acknowledged that access to secondary education had improved due to the establishment of more secondary schools within the sub-county.

One head teacher said, *“The number of secondary schools has increased over the years, which has reduced the distance students travel to access education.”*

The LC III chairperson added, *“Government programs and decentralization have helped communities access secondary education services more easily compared to the past.”*

A parish chief also stated, *“Parents now have more options for enrolling their children in nearby schools, especially government-aided schools.”*

However, some respondents noted that students from remote villages still walked long distances to school, which affected attendance and punctuality.

### **Theme 2: Inadequate teaching and learning resources**

Respondents frequently highlighted shortages of instructional materials and facilities in schools.

One head teacher explained, *“Although enrollment has increased, schools still face shortages of textbooks, laboratory equipment, and classroom furniture.”*

An inspector of schools added, *“Some schools lack adequate science laboratories and libraries, which affects effective teaching and learning.”*

The DEO stated, *“Government support exists, but resources are still insufficient to fully meet the growing needs of schools.”*

This suggests that resource inadequacy remained a significant challenge affecting education quality.

### **Theme 3: Teacher availability and professional commitment**

Several respondents observed improvements in teacher attendance and commitment due to regular supervision and monitoring.

One inspector of schools said, *“Teacher attendance has generally improved because schools are supervised more regularly than before.”*

A head teacher added, *“Most teachers are committed to their work, although staffing shortages still exist in some subject areas.”*

However, respondents also noted that some schools continued to experience shortages of qualified teachers, especially in science subjects.

### **Theme 4: School management and coordination of education services**

Respondents generally agreed that school management structures had improved coordination of education services. A head teacher stated, *“School management committees and Boards of Governors are now more involved in school planning and supervision.”*

The LC III chairperson added, *“There is better coordination between schools and local government authorities under decentralization.”*

However, some respondents indicated that management effectiveness varied across schools depending on leadership capacity and available resources.

### **Theme 5: Student discipline and academic performance**

Most respondents reported that discipline among students had improved, although some challenges remained.

One parish chief said, *“Schools have strengthened disciplinary measures, which have improved student behavior and attendance.”*

A head teacher added, *“Academic performance has improved in some schools due to better supervision and increased stakeholder involvement.”*

However, inspectors of schools noted that indiscipline cases such as absenteeism and late coming still affected some schools, particularly in rural communities.

### **Theme 6: Inadequate infrastructure and maintenance challenges**

Infrastructure challenges emerged as a major concern among respondents.

A district planner stated, *“Some schools still have inadequate classrooms, poor sanitation facilities, and insufficient laboratory space.”*

A bursar added, *“Maintenance of school facilities is difficult because available funds are not enough to meet infrastructure demands.”*

Inspection reports also confirmed that overcrowding and aging facilities negatively affected the learning environment in some schools.

### **Theme 7: Community and parental involvement in education**

Respondents indicated that community participation in education had improved, although not uniformly.

One LC III councilor said, *“Parents and community leaders are increasingly participating in school activities and monitoring learner discipline.”*

A parish chief explained, *“Some parents actively support school development projects, but others still show limited involvement in their children’s education.”*

This suggests that community support varied depending on socio-economic and cultural factors.

### **Theme 8: Support for co-curricular activities**

Several respondents observed that co-curricular activities were important but inadequately supported.

A head teacher said, *"Sports and other co-curricular activities help students develop talents and discipline, but schools lack enough funding to support them effectively."*

The DEO added, *"Most schools prioritize academics because of limited financial resources, leaving co-curricular programs underfunded."*

This finding indicates an imbalance between academic and extracurricular support in schools.

### **Theme 9: Communication and stakeholder engagement**

Respondents generally acknowledged improvements in communication between schools and stakeholders.

One head teacher said, *"There is improved communication between schools, parents, and local leaders through meetings and school management structures."*

An LC III chairperson added, *"Stakeholder engagement has strengthened accountability and community support for education programs."*

However, some respondents indicated that communication gaps still existed in certain schools, particularly regarding financial transparency and policy implementation.

### **Summary of qualitative findings**

Overall, the qualitative findings revealed that secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County had improved in terms of access, management coordination, supervision, and stakeholder participation. Respondents acknowledged positive developments such as increased school availability, improved teacher accountability, and strengthened governance structures.

However, significant challenges continued to affect effective service delivery, including inadequate teaching materials, insufficient infrastructure, limited funding, staffing shortages, and inconsistent parental involvement. These findings suggest that while decentralization had contributed to improvements in secondary education, additional investment and stronger implementation mechanisms were necessary to enhance education quality, accessibility, and sustainability.

### **Documentary findings on secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County**

The documentary review involved analysis of school records, district education reports, inspection reports, attendance registers, academic performance reports, infrastructure assessment reports, financial statements, and policy documents related to secondary education service delivery. The purpose of the review was to validate and complement information obtained through questionnaires and interviews.

The findings were organized according to major themes emerging from the reviewed documents.

### **1. Increased access to secondary education services**

Enrollment records and district education reports indicated that access to secondary education had improved in Busoba Sub-County over the study period. The reviewed records showed an increase in student enrollment in both government-aided and private secondary schools.

The documents further revealed that the establishment of additional secondary schools under government programs reduced the distance travelled by learners in some communities. School admission records also showed gradual increases in female student enrollment, indicating improved participation in secondary education.

However, attendance registers and community reports indicated that some learners from remote areas still faced accessibility challenges due to long travel distances and limited transport facilities.

### **2. Teacher availability and staffing patterns**

Staff establishment records and teacher deployment reports showed that most secondary schools had qualified teachers employed by the government and school management authorities.

However, staffing reports revealed shortages in specialized subject areas, particularly science subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics. Some schools operated with fewer teachers than the recommended staffing structure, resulting in high teacher workloads.

Teacher attendance records showed relatively improved attendance levels in schools that received regular supervision and monitoring from district education officials.

### **3. Availability of teaching and learning materials**

School inventory reports and inspection records revealed that teaching and learning materials were available in most schools, though not always adequate to meet student needs.

The documents showed shortages of textbooks, laboratory equipment, computers, and library materials in several schools. Inspection reports noted that some schools shared limited instructional materials among large numbers of students, which affected effective learning.

The reviewed documents also indicated disparities in resource availability between urban and rural schools, with urban schools generally being better equipped.

### **4. School infrastructure and learning environment**

Infrastructure assessment reports revealed that although some schools had benefited from classroom construction and renovation projects, infrastructure gaps still existed.

Several reports documented inadequate classrooms, overcrowding, insufficient laboratory space, and limited library facilities in some schools. Sanitation reports also indicated shortages of toilets and clean water facilities in certain institutions.

The documents further showed that maintenance of school facilities was constrained by inadequate funding and the delayed implementation of infrastructure projects.

### 5. Academic performance trends

Academic performance records, including Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) results, indicated moderate improvement in student performance in some secondary schools within the sub-county.

Schools with stronger supervision systems, better staffing levels, and relatively adequate instructional materials generally recorded better academic outcomes. However, performance disparities existed among schools due to differences in infrastructure, staffing, and socio-economic conditions of learners.

Inspection reports further noted that absenteeism, inadequate parental support, and insufficient learning materials negatively affected academic achievement in some schools.

### 6. Teacher and student discipline

Disciplinary records and inspection reports indicated improvement in teacher punctuality and student discipline in schools with active supervision and school management structures.

However, some records still reported cases of student absenteeism, indiscipline, and occasional teacher absenteeism. School management minutes showed that disciplinary committees were operational in most schools and regularly handled disciplinary matters.

The reviewed reports suggested that supervision and stakeholder involvement contributed positively to maintaining discipline within schools.

### 7. Community and stakeholder participation

Minutes from School Management Committee (SMC) and Board of Governors (BoG) meetings showed increased participation of parents, local leaders, and community representatives in school management activities.

The reviewed documents indicated that stakeholders participated in budgeting, infrastructure development, discipline management, and monitoring of school activities. However, participation levels varied among schools depending on community mobilization and socio-economic conditions.

Some reports highlighted limited parental involvement in monitoring students' academic progress, especially in rural communities.

### 8. Co-curricular activities and student development

School activity reports revealed that most schools organized co-curricular activities such as sports, debates, music, dance, and drama competitions.

However, the documents indicated inadequate funding and limited facilities for the effective implementation of co-curricular programs. Some schools lacked sports equipment and adequate playgrounds, limiting student participation in extracurricular activities.

Despite these challenges, inspection reports emphasized the importance of co-curricular activities in promoting learner discipline, teamwork, and talent development.

### 9. Communication and administrative coordination

Administrative records and school management minutes indicated improved communication between schools, district education offices, and local government authorities.

The reviewed documents showed that regular meetings were held to discuss budgeting, academic performance, supervision findings, and school development plans. However, some reports highlighted delays in communication regarding policy implementation and financial disbursement.

This affected timely decision-making and implementation of planned school activities in some institutions.

### Summary of documentary findings

Overall, documentary evidence revealed that secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County had improved in several areas, particularly in terms of school access, stakeholder participation, supervision, and administrative coordination.

However, the reviewed documents also highlighted persistent challenges affecting effective service delivery, including inadequate infrastructure, shortages of teaching materials, staffing gaps, limited funding, and inconsistent parental involvement.

The documentary findings, therefore, complemented both the quantitative and qualitative findings, confirming that while decentralization had strengthened secondary education management and accessibility, significant implementation and resource-related challenges continued to affect education quality and efficiency.

### Correlational analysis of findings

The study conducted a correlational analysis to determine the relationship between decentralized legislation and secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to establish the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables. The findings are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Correlation between political decentralization and secondary education service delivery**

Variables	Decentralized Legislation	Secondary Education Service Delivery
Decentralized Legislation	1	
Secondary Education Service Delivery	.611**	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The results revealed a significant positive relationship between decentralized legislation and secondary education service delivery ( $r = 0.611$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This implies that effective implementation of decentralized laws and policies was associated with improved education service delivery, including better accountability, participation, and school governance.

### Discussion

The study findings revealed that decentralized legislation had a positive and significant relationship with secondary education service delivery in Busoba Sub-County. The quantitative findings showed that respondents generally agreed that existing education laws clearly defined the roles of local governments in secondary education management, promoted accountability, and improved stakeholder participation in school governance. The correlation analysis further established a significant positive relationship between decentralized legislation and secondary education service delivery ( $r = 0.611$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The qualitative findings supported the quantitative results, as respondents reported that decentralized legislation had strengthened governance structures through School Management Committees (SMCs), Boards of Governors (BoGs), and local government participation in education management. Head teachers and district officials indicated that local legislation enhanced participation in decision-making and improved accountability mechanisms within schools. Documentary evidence also confirmed the existence of formal legal and policy frameworks guiding school governance and education administration.

These findings are consistent with Smith and Brown (2022), who argued that local governments are strategically positioned to implement educational policies that reflect the unique needs of their communities. Similarly, Anderson and Taylor (2023) observed that decentralized legislation allows flexibility in addressing local educational challenges and improves responsiveness in service delivery. The findings also support Jones (2023), who emphasized that local legislation can improve educational governance by addressing issues related to marginalized groups and local educational priorities.

However, despite the positive contribution of decentralized legislation, the study identified several challenges affecting effective implementation. Respondents reported weak enforcement of education laws, political interference, and low awareness of education policies among stakeholders.

Documentary findings further revealed inconsistencies in implementation and weak follow-up on policy compliance. These findings agree with Jones (2023) and Anderson and Taylor (2023), who noted that fragmentation and inconsistencies between local and national education policies often create administrative confusion and reduce policy effectiveness.

The findings also corroborate Wilson and Green (2022), who argued that inadequate administrative capacity and limited resources hinder effective implementation of local education policies. Similarly, Smith and Turner (2022) observed that weak coordination and inconsistencies in local educational governance contribute to disparities in educational outcomes across jurisdictions.

Overall, the findings imply that decentralized legislation has enhanced governance, participation, and accountability in secondary education service delivery. However, effective implementation remains constrained by weak enforcement mechanisms, political influence, and inadequate sensitization of stakeholders regarding education laws and policies.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that decentralized legislation had a positive and statistically significant relationship with secondary education service delivery. This was confirmed by the correlation results ( $r = 0.611$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a moderate positive relationship between decentralized legislation and education service delivery.

Despite these positive findings, the study concluded that the effectiveness of decentralized legislation was limited by weak enforcement of education laws, political interference, and low awareness of policies among stakeholders. Therefore, while decentralized legislation improves education service delivery, its impact is dependent on effective implementation and enforcement mechanisms.

### Recommendation

The study recommends that local governments and education authorities should strengthen the enforcement of education laws and bylaws to ensure effective implementation at the school level. This can be achieved through regular monitoring, strict compliance mechanisms, and clear penalties for non-adherence to education policies. It is further recommended that continuous sensitization and training programs should be conducted for School Management Committees (SMCs), Boards of Governors

(BoGs), teachers, and community leaders to improve awareness of their roles under decentralized education legislation. This will enhance participation, accountability, and compliance with education policies.

In addition, the study recommends improved coordination between central and local government education authorities to reduce policy inconsistencies and fragmentation. Harmonization of national and local education policies will help ensure uniform standards and improve overall education service delivery.

The study also recommends minimizing political interference in education decision-making processes to allow professional and merit-based implementation of education laws and regulations.

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### List of abbreviations

**ACOS:** Advertising Cost of Sales

**AI:** Artificial Intelligence

**BoG:** Board of Governors

**CVI:** Content Validity Index

**D.E.O / DEO:** District Education Officer

**GPTs:** Generative Pre-trained Transformers

**GTS:** Validation Framework (*as referenced in the context layout*)

**LC II:** Local Council II

**LC III:** Local Council III

**LLM:** Large Language Model

**M:** Mean

**S3–S6:** Senior Three to Senior Six

**SMC:** School Management Committee

**SPSS:** Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

**Std. Dev:** Standard Deviation

**VO:** Voice-Over

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### Informed consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before their inclusion in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

### Author contributions

**IM:** collected the data.

**BN:** supervised the study.

**EB:** supervised the study.

### Data availability

Data is available upon request from the author.

### Author biography

**Issa Masambu:** a student pursuing a master's degree in public administration and management at Team University

**Benard Nuwatuhaire:** research supervisor at Team University

**Edmand Bakashaba:** research supervisor at Team University

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