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**SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER RECRUITMENT METHODS IN BUSHENYI DISTRICT, UGANDA.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Recruitment of teachers is a key aspect of school management since it has a direct bearing on the quality of education. There are diverse methods of recruitment open to employers in the current times, ranging from public advertisements followed by interviews, recruitment through recruitment agencies, unsolicited applications, apprentice schemes, head hunting and direct recruitment from teacher training institutions. It was established that in most Ugandan secondary schools, except for teachers who were posted by government, school headteachers mainly relied on head hunting or unsolicited applications. Public advertisements and merit interviews were rarely used and most locally recruited teachers neither asked for nor were given appointment letters, despite this being a requirement of the law.

**Key Words:** Secondary schools, teacher recruitment, recruitment methods, school management

**INTRODUCTION**

In an increasingly global and sophisticated marketplace, recruitment and selection has become an essential tool for organisations to ensure that they have the human resource that they require to achieve their goals (Ntimoah, Abrokwah, Agyei-Sakyi & Siaw; 2014). Terpestra (1996) adds that good recruitment and selection practices seek to identify and hire the most suitable applicant while Dessler (2000) emphasizes that employers always seek to hire those. Good recruitment and selection practices can minimize the risks of failing to achieve the organizational strategies and of incurring needless costs (Killibanda & Fonda; 1997). Meanwhile, Randall (1987) warns that poor recruitment decisions can affect organizational performance and adversely affect goal achievement. When recruiting teachers, schools should aim at having the most qualified and motivated teachers that will help the school to fulfill the needs of their clients (Gross & DeArmond; 2011)

Secondary education in Uganda, like everywhere else in the world, is an important stage of education that caters for students aged approximately 12 to 18. According to the law that governs the running of secondary schools in Uganda (Uganda Education Act 2008), secondary schools in Uganda are broadly categorized into four types namely; public/government aided institutions, private institutions and non-formal education centres. Students join secondary education after completing the seven year primary stage of education. The Secondary stage of education is a bridging stage from where many students progress to University or other tertiary institutions. This stage of education consists of the first 4 years commonly known as the Ordinary level and

another 2 years commonly known as the Advanced Level. Like elsewhere in Uganda, the main categories of secondary schools are public schools and private schools. Most of the public schools are owned by religious foundation bodies while private schools are owned by private individuals or groups.

### **Recruitment of Teachers Secondary Schools in Uganda**

In most public secondary schools, teachers are recruited centrally by the Ministry of education and posted to the schools. When teachers finish their training courses in the various Universities and other teacher training institutions across the country, they are supposed to be registered as teachers by the Ministry of Education as a requirement of the law for them to be legally eligible for employment as teachers. Whenever there are vacancies and resources, the Education Service Commission advertises in the media and qualified candidates are short listed and interviewed for the existing vacancies. Those who pass the interviews are then appointed and the Ministry of Education posts them to various schools around the country depending on the needs of the schools.

However, due to budgetary and logistical constraints, in almost all the schools, the government has not been able to recruit enough teachers for all subjects and classes. A number of teachers are locally recruited by the school headteachers, on behalf of the schools' Boards of Governors. According to Matovu (2014), in Uganda, the number of teachers posted to schools by government is not enough and this has forced schools to locally recruit teachers and cater for their payment using funds locally generated from parents.

Meanwhile, in the private schools, teacher recruitment is entirely the responsibility of the headteachers, on behalf of the schools' owners. This is usually done as and when the schools realize the need, for instance when some teachers retire or are laid off for one reason or another or when a new teaching subject is introduced.

### **Common Methods of Teacher Recruitment**

There are many different methods of recruitment to choose from in the current times. One of such methods is on-line recruitment. This may be done through on-line boards and websites. Online recruitment has the advantage of being cost effective, quick and easy to reach prospective applicants in various parts of the country and the world. However, this method may have the disadvantage of attracting too many applicants. A big number of applicants may make the process of choosing the appropriate candidates cumbersome and slow. Besides, the method may attract unqualified candidates or leave out those qualified candidates that may not have access to the internet or knowledge about how to use it.

Another common and possible method is use of recruitment agencies or consultants. This method may be preferred because it may promote professionalism and eliminate corruption since the employment agency may not have a direct interest in the school where the applicants will be eventually selected to work. However, this lack of direct interest may in itself be a disadvantage since the agency may not so much care about the competencies of the recruits. Besides, the method may be costly as it involves payment to the agency staff for the service offered.

Moreover, the professionalism and impartiality of the agency staff may itself not be fully guaranteed and there is always a possibility of the agency staff to be compromised by shrewd but undeserving applicants.

Recruitment may also be done by putting adverts in various media such as print media, radio, television and public announcements. While this method may have the advantage of reaching as many people as possible, it is still possible that some deserving applicants may not get information especially considering that there are usually so many media outlets in a locality and it may not be practically possible to put adverts on all of them. Besides, the method is likely to yield too many applicants thereby making the selection process slow, costly and cumbersome.

Recruitment may also be done by selecting from the pool of unsolicited applicants that usually bring in their applications. This method may be cheap and convenient as it enables the employer to avoid costs of running adverts and the tedious process of selection. The limitation with this method is that it limits the choice of the employer to only the pool of voluntary unsolicited applicants. It is possible that such a pool may not contain well qualified or experienced applicants at any one time.

In some schools, recruitment is done through apprenticeship schemes. This is a situation where school leavers are first taken on as trainees or volunteers and eventually when such trainees prove their worth or when a vacancy becomes available, such trainees or volunteers are taken on as permanent staff. The advantage with this method is that the employer has sufficient time to satisfy themselves about the competencies and character of the new employees before taking them on. The disadvantage however is that the method may not be helpful where there is an urgent need to fill a position and there happens to be no trainee in the organization at that particular time. Besides, the method may be time consuming and expensive since it may involve enrolment of several trainees to choose from after a period of time. Moreover, the method may expose the organization to individuals who may lack competency or commitment to fulfill organizational goals.

Sometimes school managers may rely on current employees to recommend or source for other employees that they may believe to have the qualifications and passion to join the team. While this method may help to identify individuals who may be good, there is also a danger of promoting parochialism, nepotism and negative camaraderie on the job which may affect productivity. Besides, current employees may not necessarily have the expertise or knowledge to select the right caliber of new employees.

Another possible method of recruitment is for schools to partner with teacher training institutions so that the staff in the training institutions identify and recommend school leavers who may be having the desired qualities and competencies. While this may be a cheap and efficient method, it limits the choice to only school leavers who are novice and lack experience on the job. Moreover, some teacher trainees may have been performing and behaving well while in the teacher training institution but this may not necessarily translate into good performance on the job.

Another possible and common method of recruitment is the recruitment of relatives and friends. Sometimes relatives and friends are recruited because the employer knows them or trusts them or because the employer wants to help the relatives or friends to earn a living. While this may have positive results in some cases, it is on the whole unprofessional and promotes nepotism and cronyism and may leave out other deserving applicants.

### **Secondary School Teacher Recruitment Methods in Bushenyi District**

According to Uganda education Statistical Abstract (2015), Bushenyi District has a total of 36 secondary schools. Out of these, 12 are government aided while 24 are private schools. In the context of Uganda, government aided schools are those schools where government undertakes to employ and pay teachers, on top of providing other forms of aid such as laboratory equipment, computers, library books and school infrastructure. It should be noted however, that in most of the government schools, government does not pay all the teachers because due to budgetary constraints, government has for the last few years not been employing any new teachers. This has resulted into an effort on the part of the government aided schools to employ other teachers who are paid privately from funds generated from parents.

In the private schools which are exclusively owned by private individuals or organisations, all teachers are employed and paid by the schools and government only plays a supervisory role of ensuring that teachers are registered by the Ministry of Education.

For purposes of this paper, 12 headteachers from 12 schools were interviewed about a range of questions concerning teacher recruitment methods. Half of the number of headteachers interviewed was from government aided schools while the other half was from private schools.

It was established that the average number of teachers in government secondary schools was 60. On average, 60% of the teachers were employed by government while 40% was employed privately by the schools. It was established that teachers who were employed by government were posted by the Ministry of Education having been interviewed by the Education Service Commission after qualifying from the teacher training institutions, or they were posted on transfer from other government aided schools elsewhere in the country. The headteachers in the government aided schools however said that they were at liberty to send back teachers posted to their schools if they found that they did not have a teaching load for them or if they doubted their competence or discipline.

As for the teachers who were recruited locally and not on government pay roll, it was established that about 65% of such teachers were often recruited by referring to application files of unsolicited applications. All headteachers reported that they had very many applications in their files and whenever a vacancy was available, they would visit the application files and select the most qualified candidates and contact them to come and fill up the vacancies. In about 20% of the cases where suitable candidates were not found in the files, the headteachers said they would contact fellow headteachers to identify suitable candidates who would then be contacted. In 15% of the cases, the headteachers said they would ask heads of departments or other teachers on the staff to identify colleagues or relatives who they knew to come up and fill the vacancies.

All headteachers in the government aided schools said they did not consider other means of recruitment such as advertisement because they considered such means as being unnecessarily expensive and they feared that they would not be able to get teachers of desirable quality in terms of competence and discipline. One of the headteachers however reported that sometimes the newly recruited teachers may end up failing to perform to expectations despite having been recruited on the strength of the quality of their academic papers in which case such teachers are usually laid off.

Asked whether they conducted any interviews for the locally recruited teachers, all the headteachers of government aided secondary schools said they never conducted any formal interviews but rather they relied on the academic papers of the applicants and the knowledge the recommendation of other people about the character and competence of the applicants.

The headteachers in the government aided schools reported that only about 10% of the locally recruited teachers were given formal appointment letters while the majority never bothered to ask for the appointment letters and the headteachers were also not keen on giving the appointment letters. Asked why they were not keen to give the appointment letters even when it is a requirement of the law (Uganda Government Employment Act 2006), the headteachers said they did not want to create a situation that may make it difficult to lay off such teachers in the event that their services were no longer required or were found wanting. Relatedly, almost all headteachers in the government aided schools reported that there was no specific known pay rate and the monthly emoluments depended on the bargaining capacity of the applicants and the amount that the school could afford.

The average number of teachers in the private schools was established at 40 in each school, all locally recruited by head teachers at the schools. In most of the schools, like in the government schools, it was established that teaching jobs were never advertised in public media because this was considered expensive and unnecessary. In one of the schools, the headteacher said that whenever a vacancy became available, the school administration started a process of what she called head hunting for the right candidate to fill the vacancy. In majority of the cases this process involved asking around from neighbouring schools in the region about a prospective right person for the job. Once such a person was found, he or she would be contacted to consider leaving his or her current job so as to fill the vacancy or if such a teacher had some spare time, they would be given a part-time job and be asked to use their free time to take up the teaching load. It was established that most schools were involved in the practice of spotting good teachers from other schools and offering them better pay so as to convince them to leave their stations and join new schools. In only one of the six private schools, the headteacher said that they conducted oral interviews for new applicants but even then, such interviews were informal conversations just meant for familiarization. Otherwise, teachers were almost always recruited on the strength of the quality of their academic papers or recommendations of students who such teachers had taught previously.

In one of the schools, the headteacher said that about 20% of newly recruited teachers are sourced from teacher training institutions on the recommendation of the management of the

training institutions. However, such teachers are usually employed on probation for a period of 6 months to one year to prove their worth before they are given permanent contracts.

It was established that teachers were given formal appointment letters and signed contracts in only one third of the schools while in the rest of the schools teachers were simply given verbal instructions to go and start teaching. Asked why they were not keen on giving appointment letters, like their counterparts in the government aided schools, the headteachers said they did not want to make it difficult for them to lay off the teachers in case it became necessary. Others said they did not think it was important since even the teachers themselves did not insist on having appointment letters or signing long term contracts.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

It was established that in most schools, especially for teachers who were not recruited and employed by government, most school head teachers preferred to avoid public advertisement whenever they had vacancies to fill, mainly because they considered the method to be expensive and cumbersome. While there may be some reasonable justification for the methods preferred by the head teachers, avoiding public advertising may well be creating room for nepotism and lack of transparency in the recruitment of teachers. This state of affairs may be locking out many deserving applicants and may be contributing to a situation where employment is not done on merit. Such a situation may adversely affect the quality of teachers and the quality of education at large.

The fact that in almost all the schools there were no formal interviews carried out prior to recruitment of teachers is another point of concern. This implies that quality assurance in human resource management was highly compromised right from the onset. It also implies that very many deserving teachers may be languishing without employment when their less deserving counterparts may be in employment because somehow they were known to the employing authorities.

The finding that most of the locally employed teachers in both government aided schools and private schools did not have appointment letters or formal contracts, in blatant contravention of the law, is something to worry about. While the employers are not keen on giving appointment letters in order to make it easy for them to avoid responsibility, the teachers themselves seem not to be keen on demanding for the letters for fear of being branded as being problematic and inquisitive. It is possible that this situation generates lack of commitment and uncertainty for both employer and employee and this may adversely affect productivity and efficiency.

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