



The Ugandan Journal of Management and Public Policy Studies (UJMPPS)

December 2023, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 102-126

ISSN: 2078-7049 (Print), 2959-4316 (Online)

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Published by Uganda Management Institute

## Learning Management by Gambling? An exploration of how New Secondary School Administrators gain Management Proficiency in Uganda

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### Article History

Received: October 16, 2023

Revised: November 30, 2023

Accepted: December 15, 2023

### Abstract

*Like most African countries, Uganda does not require secondary school administrators to have done specialist Education management training prior to appointment. Without management training beyond the general teacher education pre-service programme, how do new school administrators cope with the management demands of their offices? What local strategies do they leverage to accelerate development of management ability? These questions sparked off the study. Its aim was to explore how new secondary school administrators gain management proficiency in Uganda despite absence of specialist management training as a prerequisite. The study used a tripartite case study design with school administrators as the key participants. It also utilised individual and group interviews as well as thematic analysis. The study discovered that new school administrators learn management rather casually and sporadically. It concluded that, in Uganda, acquisition of management proficiency involves much gambling to the detriment of effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** School Administration, Educational Management Preparation, Management Proficiency



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## Introduction

The importance of school management for school performance cannot be overstated. School management does not only create a conducive environment for learner and staff performance (Bayar, 2016; Manaseh, Mislai & Ngalomba, 2022), but also operationalizes the school vision (Bush & Anania, 2023; Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020). As Barber, Whelan and Clark (2008) posit, “the performance of a school almost never exceeds the quality of its leadership and management” (p. 21). With proficient school management, there is collaborative goal setting, teamwork, regular instructional supervision, and support for teacher development (Tedla & Kilango, 2022; Pont, Nuschem & Moorman, 2008; Peter, Okendo & Lyamtane, 2021). “Better management can be a low-cost strategy for improving learning outcomes” (Crawford, 2017: 26). Without such ‘better’ (or ‘proficient’) management among school administrators, “government initiatives aimed at building world-class education systems are unlikely to succeed” (Eacott & Asuga, 2014: 919). Of all school-related factors, administrative management is believed to be second only to classroom instruction in influencing learner achievement (Leithwood, Harrisn & Hopkins, 2008). Thus, having proficient or non-proficient administrators makes a critical difference in the realization of school goals (Okoko, 2018; Memon et al., 2006).

However, in Uganda, the administration of many schools is reported to be characterized by maladministration as indicated by such practices as unfair application of sanctions (Ajuna, 2019; Lubega, Aguti & Genza, 2022), covering up of reckless teachers (patronage) (Ssempala, Ssenkusu & Mitana, 2021), mismanagement of staff appraisals (Crawford, 2017), and staff dismissal without following due processes (Government of Uganda [GoU], 2021). Many headteachers have also made it the norm to absent themselves from school, with their absenteeism standing at 19.4 per cent (Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2014). Stakeholders blame such unreasonable actions and inactions on administrators’ lack of specialist management training beyond the general pre-service programme (Okoko, 2018). Without such extra training, how do school administrators learn school management? There was need of a study to interrogate these issues for better practice.

The study was justified by the need for research on what might work in school management preparation beyond general pre-service teacher training programmes (Okoko, 2018; Memon, Simkins, Sisum & Zubeda, 2006; Bush, 2008; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010; Revesz, 2011). What local resources and strategies are school administrators leveraging to sharpen their school management capacities in African countries like Uganda? What are the current management preparation practices, and what policy directions accrue to them? The study sought answers to such questions.

The term ‘management preparation’ refers to “the process of grooming potential candidates in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for sound educational management leadership [sic]” (Manaseh et al., 2022: 32). In the current study, management preparation refers to all avenues organized by different stakeholders to enhance secondary school teachers’ capacity for running schools (Manaseh et al., 2022; Sperandio et al., 2010).

This ‘running’ consists of five essential tasks that school administrators carry out. The

five are planning, organizing, staffing, controlling, and leading (Koontz & Wehrich, 2003). The way one carries out these tasks mirrors one's level of management proficiency, which, in a school setting, aims at enhancing school system wellbeing in general and teaching and learning in particular (Genza, 2022). In this line, Leithwood et al. (2004), as cited by Sepuru et al. (2020), describes management proficiency as being "characterised by the principal's ability to give direction, develop other people and redesign the organisation for improving student learning" (p. 2). Borrowing from Uganda's Education Act 2006 (GoU, 2006), Peter et al. (2021) and Sepuru et al. (2020), the current study conceptualized management proficiency in terms of the way a head teacher / deputy head teacher carries out routine school procedures (such as meetings) and handles finances, learners, staff, parents, and other stakeholders. The management preparations that a teacher undergoes before assuming a management office are critical to his/her eventual practice as an administrator. Nevertheless, different nations have different preparation schemes for their prospective school administrators.

#### *Assuming school administration in the Western world and in Africa*

By the end of the twentieth century, the Western world had realized that school "headship is a specialist occupation that requires specific preparation" (Bush, 2008: 26). England, Singapore, France and much of the USA started requiring aspiring school principals to acquire a leadership / management qualification. For this purpose, in the year 2000, the UK opened a National College for School Leadership (NCSL) – the largest national school leadership centre in the world (Bush, 2008; Pont et al., 2008). In the UK, one cannot serve as a headteacher unless one holds the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), or its equivalent, among other requirements (Department for Education, 2023; Sepuru et al., 2020). Most other Western countries without specialist leadership centres have at least developed national leadership standards such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in the US (since 1996) (Canole & Young, 2013). Some of the US states further require a Master's degree in educational administration, as well as certificates in such pertinent fields as counselling and cultural diversity (Eacott et al., 2014).

Even then, some European countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Spain have no mandatory requirements for a particular formal qualification in education leadership or management before appointment (Pont et al., 2008). For Sweden, school principals attend a national head teachers' training programme only after about two years in office (Pont et al., 2008). However, exceptions notwithstanding, acquiring a particular qualification in school management before assuming headship remains the norm in most Western countries. Experience has taught the West that general pre-service teacher training programmes are incapable of providing proficiency in such key school management aspects as human resource and financial management, as well as networking beyond the school border (Revesz, 2011).

Yet in Africa, there is no formal management-training requirement for aspiring head teachers (Eacott et al., 2014). Teachers are appointed as school heads based on their general pre-service qualifications and teaching experience (Sepuru et al., 2020: 1). There is an assumption that these are sufficient for school leadership (Bush, 2008). However, how does teaching ability, however exceptional, translate into management ability?

With the growing complexity of what the school administrator goes through in Africa (Medford & Brown, 2022; Mestry, 2017; Sepuru et al., 2020), the importance of particular preparation for headship becomes even more necessary. In Africa, the administrator “play[s] a panoply of roles...and make[s] a myriad of decisions to ensure student learning” (Kaahwa & Buregea, 2017: 2). These are roles and decisions related with dismal physical infrastructure, financial and human resource management, work overload, student violence, legal issues, and, sometimes, negligent school boards (Medford et al., 2022; Bayar, 2016; Sepuru et al., 2020; Peter et al., 2021; Pont et al., 2008; Okoko, 2018). There is also responsibility “for strategic planning, budgets, managing industrial relations, procuring resources and facilitating marketing and public relations” (Starr, 2009 as cited by Mestry, 2017: 1). Bush (2008) posits that in this context,

*Requiring individuals to lead schools...manage staff and care for children, without specific preparation, may be seen as foolish, even reckless, as well as being manifestly unfair for the new incumbent (Bush, 2008: 30).*

As Oduro (2009) and Mestry (2017) opine, specialist management training might be the missing link in the effective delivery of education in Africa. If there is no particular management preparation for the management role in Africa, how do new school administrators cope with their new offices? How do they acquire management proficiency to run schools effectively?

#### *Practices in South and East Africa*

Some African countries have started taking specialist school management preparation more seriously, though not without regressions and contradictions. The first example is South Africa (SA). Although at the beginning of 2007 SA was among the countries “that do not require a compulsory and specific qualification for principalship” (van der Westhuizen et al., 2007: 421), by the end of the same year she had launched an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) for the principalship. This was a “practice-based two-year part-time course addressing the professional development concerns of head teachers, by providing opportunities for both current and aspiring head teachers” (Eacott et al., 2014: 927). Unfortunately, in 2009 the course stopped – after running for only two years (Sepuru et al., 2020).

Five years later (2014), SA professionalized her national education governance standards by creating a mandatory qualification. “Aspiring school leaders must obtain the National Professional Qualification for Principals (NPQP) to qualify as a school head teacher candidate [sic]” (Eacott et al., 2014: 927). This was a promising development on the African continent. However, due to logistical constraints, many new school heads still went without formal preparation beyond the pre-service programme. In a study done three years after 2014, “the participants unanimously agreed that they were appointed as principals without having any professional training or formal preparation for their principalship” (Mestry, 2017: 7). A more recent study concurs, revealing that beginner principals have not been “prepared and trained for leadership and management before and after appointment” (Sepuru et al., 2020: 6).

The second example is Kenya (E. Africa). Kenya does not require one to have a specialist school management qualification before appointment. Even after accession, the few available

bits of preparation (induction) arrangements are said to be piecemeal and sporadic, hence of questionable effectiveness (Okoko, 2018). However, there are some promising developments. In 2011, the country developed a particular institute for school management support– the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) whose mission is to enhance educational leaders’ management competences and bring about a paradigm shift among educational administrators (KEMI, 2023). KEMI’s courses include a one-year Postgraduate diploma in education leadership and management (for principals, headteachers, deputies, and heads of department) (KEMI, 2023).

There are conflicting reports about the impact of KEMI so far. One study indicates that, even with KEMI’s input, school management preparation in Kenya remains “ad hoc, haphazard, and not responsive to the needs of current and aspiring principals” (Eacott et al., 2014: 925). A more recent study reports a strong positive correlation between KEMI’s capacity building programmes and head teachers’ competences in teacher and infrastructure management, as well as curriculum supervision (Ongori, 2021). Perhaps, with time, Kenya’s interventions have begun to bear fruit in terms of principals’ management proficiency.

Tanzania (E. Africa) offers another interesting case. In 2001, the country established a semi-autonomous institution mandated to train education personnel in educational leadership, management and administration. It is called ADEM: Agency for the Development of Educational Management. “ADEM is the only agency where after being appointed, secondary school heads are usually trained” (Peter et al., 2021: 80). Among the courses there is “a one year Certificate in Education Leadership, Management and Administration (CELMA), [and] a two-year Diploma in Education Management and Administration (DEMA) [sic]” (ADEM website, <https://www.adem.ac.tz/welcome>). However, nearly a decade after the founding of ADEM, research indicated that “the education system in Tanzania was being managed at all levels by non-professional education administrators, using only their classroom teaching experience coupled with trial and error administrative experience” (Sabimbona, 2010: 10). More recently ADEM’s services have again been criticized for being ad-hoc, inequitably accessible, and limited in their impact on practicing educational administrators (Manaseh et al., 2022). However, when it comes to enhancing administrators’ communication skills, ADEM is reported to be successful (Peter et al., 2021). These are promising developments on the continent, even though to-date Tanzania does not require prospective school administrators to have specialist management qualifications.

### *School headship requirements in Uganda*

Uganda does not require prospective school heads to have undergone particular formal training in school leadership / management. The country’s Education Service Commission (ESC) which is responsible for the appointment of administrators in government and government-aided schools (ESC, 2021), indicates that the requirements for appointment are only academic qualifications for teaching, registration as a teacher, teaching experience, and service at a previous rank. ESC appoints about 300 primary and secondary school head and deputy head teachers annually (ESC, 2021).

**Table 1: Requirements for secondary school headship**

	Office	Academic qualifications	Teacher registration	Teaching experience	Service at a previous rank
1	<b>Head teacher</b>	Master's degree in education; Bachelor's degree in education (or Bachelor's degree with a Postgraduate diploma in education).	Registration as a Graduate teacher with the MoES.	Twelve (12) years teaching experience in a Government owned/aided secondary school.	Three (3) years at the level of a substantive Deputy head teacher
2	<b>Deputy head teacher</b>	Bachelor's degree in education or Bachelor's degree with a Postgraduate Diploma in education.	Required.	Nine (9) years teaching experience in a Government owned/aided secondary school	Three (3) years at the level of a substantive Education Officer

Source: Education Service Commission (2021)

Table 1 shows that the requirements to become a head teacher (school principal) do not include specialist school leadership / management qualification. The Master's degree required is not necessarily in education leadership, administration and/or management. Any Master's of education degree (from a recognized institution) suffices. I consider teaching experience of 12 years to be long enough to acquire school-wide experience. However, do the three years as Deputy headteacher also provide reasonable administrative experience for full headship? I sought answers from the study's key participants.

A secondary school head teacher's duties and responsibilities in Uganda are themselves telling. Apart from being in-charge of overall administration and management of the entire school plant, the head teacher is also expected to plan for the school's physical development, teaching programmes, and staff professional development and appraisal (ESC, 2021). There is also accountability for all school activities and resources; co-ordination of school board functions; and direction of student admission and welfare (ESC, 2021). How does the ESC expect the head teacher to have proficiency in each of these areas without specialist management preparation? Perhaps from experience as a deputy head teacher! How much mentorship do deputy head teachers in Uganda actually receive from their supervisors?

Table 1 further reveals that for deputy headteachers, there is also no requirement for a specialist school leadership / management qualification. The teaching experience of nine years looks long enough for a person to acquire general knowledge in the affairs of school life. However, how much management preparation do the three (3) years as a substantive Education Officer (secondary school teacher) give a person in view of the deputy headteacher's office?

The deputy headteacher's responsibilities are enormous. S/he does not only assist the Headteacher in the overall administration of the school, but also supervises non-teaching and support staff, maintains school records and material resources, and enforces discipline (ESC, 2021). There is also curriculum implementation and management of exams. Some of

these responsibilities are understandable, for example discipline and exams management. For overall administration, since the deputy is only assisting the head teacher – a presumably more experienced officer – it is also understandable. However, how much proficiency does the deputy have on assumption of office to enable him/her to supervise non-teaching and support staff professionally? Should a (human resource) management qualification perhaps be required?

## Literature review

How can one gain management proficiency other than by acquisition of academic qualifications in Education management? Literature highlights different avenues by which school administrators may acquire management competences. However, it does not attach the same kind of value to each of them. The avenues range from “formal pre-service and in-service cohort programmes...to less formal opportunities such as professional development workshops and seminars, mentoring, coaching, internships, inductions, use of consultants, online provision, and job rotation” (Okoko, 2018: 2). Pont et al. (2008) categorises such isolated avenues into three, namely, pre-service / preparatory training (before becoming a teacher); induction training (for those who have recently taken up positions); and in-service training (for already practicing principals).

Pre-service teacher preparation is largely through course units in Education management and leadership, curriculum and psychology, among others (Memon et al., 2006; Oduro, 2009). Literature disagrees on the efficaciousness of such pre-service modules in equipping prospective administrators with school management proficiency. Some studies report that with such modules, trainees focus more on achieving accreditation than on gaining skills for school management (Eacott et al., 2014). Others posit that the pre-service curriculum “does not specifically prepare candidates to lead schools; it appears to cover general and theoretical issues in school management” (Sabimbona, 2010: 230). Bobar (2009) (as cited by Sepuru et al., 2020) concurs, arguing that school administration “requires skills and competencies not included in principals’ initial training as teachers” (p. 1). However, the studies are silent on what skills and competences these are.

Nevertheless, there are studies that extol pre-service training. In Kenya, school administrators reported that “coursework in educational administration, curriculum development, and psychology provided foundational competencies for their leadership positions” (Okoko, 2018: 4). Does it perhaps depend on the exposure of those instructing on such courses? “Instructors with both academic and field experience in school leadership” (Okoko, 2018: 9) are reported to be preferable. The question remains: what is the real value of pre-service training in preparing teachers for administrative roles as head teachers / deputies?

According to literature, teaching experience also constitutes a key avenue for school management preparation (Oduro, 2009; Sepuru et al., 2020). During their years as classroom teachers, strategic individuals are reported to spontaneously involve themselves in management tasks at their workplaces. They “derive consciousness of the nature of headship tasks from the personal experience they gain from voluntarily assisting their former headteachers”

(Oduro, 2009: 144). This is close to Australia's apprenticeship model, where aspiring school administrators are said to gain the necessary administrative skillset on-the-job gradually as they move up the ranks (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011). Sperandio et al. (2010) views this volunteering tactic as a kind of self-positioning mechanism, and contrasts it with simply assuming that academic qualifications and long service suffice. However, how pervasive and how helpful are such volunteering opportunities? Some literature indicates that, however important teaching experience is for advancing school headship, it "does not prepare them [teachers] for the challenges awaiting them in their jobs as principals" (Sepuru et al., 2020: 1).

Next is induction, also called induction training, which those that have recently taken up school management positions undergo. Induction is usually in form of a few days' workshop (non-formal training) (Okoko, 2018; Oduro, 2009; Bush, 2008). Longer workshops also exist. They last months, however uncommon and unpopular they are due to school heads' work and family preoccupations (AKU-IED, 2014; Bush, 2008; Canole et al., 2013). What kind of induction opportunities do new school administrators receive in Uganda, and how helpful are they? Literature reports that induction programmes imposed from above are less effective (Bush et al., 2023). Also Memon et al. (2006) avers that to be effective, induction ought to focus less on dissemination of a given body of knowledge, and more on administrators' particular professional and personal needs. So how helpful are induction programmes in Uganda in equipping new school heads with requisite competences?

There is yet a different but common form of induction. This is mentorship induction of new administrators by senior colleagues (Okoko, 2018). Newly appointed principals do not depend solely to their personal experiences garnered during pre-principalship (Medford et al., 2022; Sepuru et al., 2020: 2). During mentorship, novices keep "close contacts with current [senior] leaders" (Révész, 2011: 114), and interest themselves with "observing their activities and experiences" (Oduro, 2009: 143-144). One wonders how this 'observation' or 'close contact' is done. Is it with formal prior arrangement or only casually? Since mentorship should be contextualized to mentees' needs (Sepuru et al., 2020), how effective is such casual mentorship? However, cases of lack of mentorship and coaching opportunities for novice administrators are reported to be many, for example, in Guyana (Latin America) (Medford et al., 2022). In the case of Uganda, how much mentorship do deputy head teachers get? How available are senior school heads to give mentorship? What mentorship opportunities are available?

There is one more (school headship) preparation avenue, called 'trial-and-error' (Birkinshaw, Gudka & Marshall, 2022; Oduro, 2009). To run schools, many administrators report relying on "trial and error administrative experience" (Sabimbona, 2010: 10). This avenue is also known as 'learning by gambling', 'on-the-job experience', and reliance on 'common sense' (Birkinshaw et al., 2022; Sepuru et al., 2020). Among the different avenues discussed in literature, trial-and-error is reported to take the lion's share of prevalence in school administrators' preparation (Birkinshaw et al., 2022; Medford et al., 2022; Memon et al., 2006). Do these studies suggest that trial-and-error experience accounts for everything? Why should experience not go in tandem with mentorship and formal training? How does uninformed trial-and-error reconcile with the formal accounting role of school headship?



Available literature does not attach the same kind of importance to each of the avenues highlighted. For example, Sabimbona (2010) posits that the most effective avenue for providing newly appointed school heads with management proficiency is not trial-and-error but mentoring and coaching. Yet for Okoko (2018), the process of moving through the ranks gives administrators hands-on exposure that no other mode of management preparation can give. Perhaps Birkinshaw et al.'s (2022) position is more pragmatic, whereby proficiency enhancement programmes are made iterative (back-and-forth), experimental, embedded in day-to-day work, supported by coaching, and hybrid in delivery (both virtual and in-person). However, the current study still wanted to get the opinions of school administrators on the relative importance of different management avenues in enhancing their proficiency. For example, how valid is Okoko's (2018) assumption that a hybrid is better than either mode?

Assuming that school administrators in Uganda acquire management proficiency through avenues, which are similar or related to those highlighted by existing studies, I sought answers to the following four key questions.

1. How do new secondary school administrators gain management expertise in Uganda?
2. What particular post pre-service management preparation opportunities are available in Uganda?
3. How do new school heads navigate the demands of the offices for which they have probably only received remote / pre-service?
4. What is the relative importance (usefulness) of the different management preparation avenues in the Ugandan context?

The study's final goal was uncovering implications of existing management practices for school administrators' preparation in a developing world context such as that of Uganda.

### *Theoretical Underpinning*

I premised the study on Thorndike's theory of learning by trial and error (Aliakbari, Parvin, Heidari & Haghani, 2015; Behlol & Dad, 2010). The theory holds that organisms acquire "knowledge or ability through the use of experience" (Behlol et al., 2010: 233). For Thorndike, this 'experience' is acquired through reflective involvement in solving given challenges by applying one alternative after another (Behlol et al., 2010). Such involvement ('trial') often results in mistakes ('errors'), partial successes and, eventually, mastery. The theory views such errors as "a natural by-product of attempting challenging learning tasks and they may, in particular, provide learning opportunities" (Tulisa, Steueran & Dresela, 2016: 13). However, mistakes become opportunities for growth only when "learners are able to deal with them in an adaptive and reflexive manner" (Tulisa et al., 2016: 12).

As applied to the current study, the trial and error theory expects novice school administrators to involve themselves actively in administrative challenges; otherwise they will not acquire management proficiency. They should not fear making mistakes. In mistakes subsist invaluable opportunities for administrative maturity. The theory 'allows' administrators to make mistakes, as long as they continuously learn from them (Qu, Hu, Jiao & Jin, 2021) –

practice makes perfect. The theory expects administrators “to persist after setbacks, to correct the error at hand, and to reflect on the underlying misconceptions” (Tulisa et al., 2016: 12-13). In problem-solving situations, which are common in schools, the theory expects administrators to keep trying one alternative after another until they get to a solution (Aliakbari et al., 2015). However, school administrators should not make these trials mechanically as extremist behavior theorists postulate (Behlol et al., 2010).

## Methodology

The study used a narrative tripartite case study design, focusing on three school administrators purposively picked from three government-aided secondary schools in two districts of Uganda. To realise a richer constellation of management preparation experiences, I went for participants from districts of different ecological settings. I targeted those that had assumed headship in the last three to five years (between 2017 and 2022). This span was long enough for the participants to have gained considerable school headship experience, and yet short enough for recalling critical preparation incidents in their management preparation trajectories. I focused on how the administrators interpreted their lived management experiences in retrospect (Boyland, 2019). Whereas two of the three administrators were operating in urban schools in Wakiso District (Central Uganda), the third was administering in a rural school in Kamuli District (Eastern Uganda). Administrators from the two urban district schools comprised a Head Teacher (HT) and a Deputy Head Teacher (DHT-1). The rural district school administrator was a Deputy Head Teacher (DHT-2). The trio formed the study’s key (primary) participants (Table 2).

**Table 2: Key participants’ bio-data**

	Participant	Gender	Highest degree	Designation	Years as teacher	Years in office	School location
1	Naluk (DHT-1)	F	Master’s	Deputy HT	13	3	Wakiso
2	Mitego (DHT-2)	M	Master’s	Deputy HT	10	3	Kamuli
3	Ndagire (HT)	F	Bachelor’s	HT	15	5	Wakiso

Secondary respondents were two MoES officers – one District Education Officer (DEO) and one School Inspector (SI). The DEO was female, 54 years old, with six years’ experience in office. The SI was male, about 42 years old, and with four years in office. The five participants were adequate since data saturation was realised (Guest, Namey & Chen, 2006). Qualitative authorities suggest five to 25 participants for such a narrative case study (Creswell, 2012).

I catered for the study’s quality by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2015; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2013) (Table 3).

**Table 3: Study's quality protocols**

	Quality issue	Actions taken
1	Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establishing the interview guide's content validity (CVI = 0.9).</li> <li>▪ Pilot testing the interview guide.</li> <li>▪ Double-checking interview transcripts with audio recordings.</li> <li>▪ Subjecting the data transcript to independent peer debrief.</li> <li>▪ Including participants' differing views in the study.</li> </ul>
2	Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revealing details of the study's research regime &amp; participants' bio-data.</li> <li>▪ Presenting rich data descriptions (for purposes of relative transferability (Miles et al., 2013).</li> </ul>
3	Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Respecting qualitative case study protocols e.g. purposive sampling and researcher positionality.</li> </ul>
4	Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sharing data transcripts with study participants for crosschecking.</li> </ul>

I ensured ethics by preceding the signing of informed consent forms with full disclosure of what the study was about. I also informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer a given question if they thought it provocative or 'private. For each participant and school, I used pseudonyms (Miles et al., 2013). For positionality, I am in this study only a scholar interested in discovering new knowledge on school management preparation with a view of informing my Educational leadership and management teaching as a university lecturer. I did not carry out this study with any personal interests.

To enable the school administrators to think through their lived experiences before interview, I sent them the four questions (seen above), which would be the focus of our interactions. I did this two days before each one's interview. I analysed data thematically (Creswell, 2015).

Finally, Vygotsky's (1934/1986) social constructivism furnished the study with its basic methodology. Social constructivism encourages knowledge creation through documentation of participants' first-hand experiences (Sepuru et al., 2020). Participants "tell their story in their own terms – a story of reality as it is lived: from moment to moment, day to day, week to week, year to year" (Boyland, 2019: 32). This kind of epistemology enabled me to attentively journey with the school administrators as they 'narrated' their lived management experiences. My role was to seek to understand the school administrators' world as they themselves both experienced and understood it (Sepuru et al., 2020). This was 'conversational knowing' (Boyland, 2019), hence individual interview as the main data collection method, supplemented with small-scale group interview (Amin, 2005). The study's final goal was uncovering implications of current practices for school administrators' management preparation in developing-world contexts such as Uganda's.

## Findings and Discussions

Here I present the findings participant-by-participant to enable a holistic appreciation of each case. For ethical reasons, I used pseudonyms to hide participants' identities.

### Participant 1: Naluk (Deputy Head Teacher-1 [DHT-1])

On the question of ‘How new secondary school administrators gain management expertise in Wakiso District’ (where she works), Naluk (DHT-1) revealed that,

*“New administrators gain expertise through private arrangements. Each one struggles on her own or his own. For example, they pay attention to the institutional culture, which shows them how things are done in specific institutions. They also learn through mentorship from various power centres of the school e.g. PTA and BOG [Parents and Teachers’ Association / Board of Governors]. Others gain expertise by say benchmarking [colleagues] to borrow a leaf from what happens in other institutions. We also learn from [national] policy guidelines and legal frameworks in place e.g. Public Standing Orders. We have [also] internal school policies / rules and regulations that guide [us]. There is also the induction and orientation program for newly appointed Deputies, which [for my group] took place at Jinja Civil Service College, where administration and management talks were offered. It was a three days’ workshop, marathon though, with various presenters from the Ministry” (Interview, DHT-1).*

The sharing shows that according to Naluk, secondary school administrators in Wakiso gain management expertise largely through study of the school culture, as well as benchmarking colleagues / peers and policy guidelines. There is also board’s mentorship and some formal orientation by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES). These findings mean that both personal initiative and externally arranged fora are key.

Naluk’s account was silent about mentorship from her immediate supervisor (the HT). Upon further probing, Naluk observed that,

*“Head teachers prepare you but not much. They don’t have much time. As a new deputy, you have to put in your personal effort to consult others [colleagues]. Head teachers also live a consultative life. They are also consulting others” (Interview, DHT-1).*

Being a Master’s degree holder, perhaps Naluk is so self-efficacious that instead of consulting her supervisor, she prefers consulting policy for guidance. She then supplements policy with peer consultations, which appear to play a critical role in administrators’ acquisition of management expertise in Uganda.

Another sub-theme that was not apparent in Naluk’s narrative is ‘trial and error’. I asked Naluk what she thought about it. She said that,

*[With trial and error] “You may do serious mistakes. Why trial and error when legal frameworks are there? They matter more than trial and error, e.g. the Public Service Standing Orders, and the minimum standards policy” (Interview, DHT-1).*

From Naluk’s experience, ‘trial and error’ is not one of the avenues by which new school administrators gain management expertise in Uganda.

For the second question (*What particular post pre-service management preparation opportunities are available in Uganda?*), Naluk said that what is available are,

*“Seminars and workshops. I have attended quite many, all [of] which are improving my management skills e.g. handling students with disabilities, coping and dealing with difficult people, financial management programs etc... These are one-day workshops organized by the district and other organisations like Crane and Raising Voices in collaboration with the Ministry” (Interview, DHT-1).*

Thirdly, on how Naluk ‘*went about meeting the demands of the Deputy Head teacher office for which she had probably received only remote / pre-service preparation*’, she explained that,

*“First, I studied the institutional culture. It gave me good guidance about how things are done in this school. Then came orientation at school and national levels. I also consulted stakeholders here e.g. the Head teacher, teachers and board members” (Interview, DHT-1).*

These views point to the potential importance of the guidance offered by school culture, orientation, and stakeholder consultations.

Finally, I asked Naluk what, from her experience, is ‘*the relative importance of different management preparation avenues*’ in accounting for the management expertise she now has.

*“Induction and orientation greatly worked for me. These were at both school and national levels. They were very nourishing administratively. At the national level, our orientation lasted three days. Marathon with a variety of presentations. Once or twice a year also the district organizes one-day workshops for both primary and secondary school administrators. Also mastering policy guidelines and legal frames continually guides me. For whatever I do, I ask myself the question, ‘What does the policy say?’ I didn’t find benchmarking all that useful. Schools have different setups, geographically, financially and culturally. Benchmarking is like copy and paste. Administration does not work like that” (Interview, DHT-1).*

For Naluk, induction / orientation (workshops) are the single most important management preparation avenue, followed by mastery of policy guidelines. Induction of new appointees appears to be of critical importance. Less important is benchmarking other schools due to existence of different contexts. Benchmarking seems to require adaption, not adoption.

### **Participant 2: Mitego (DHT-2)**

On ‘*How new secondary school administrators gain management expertise in Kamuli District*’ (where he works), Mitego revealed that,

*“Individuals that become head teachers are officers who have been Deputy Head teachers at least for 3 years. They have been exposed to management related duties for a long time. This is true with those that assume offices on promotion for example Head*

teachers who are appointed on promotion from Deputy. They have experience having worked as Deputies. However, this is dependent on the character of the head teacher under whom this officer worked. A newly appointed deputy who is lucky and he/she is posted in a school where the head teacher is positive and experienced, the officer will be helped to improve. But there are those [Head teachers] who do not want to expose their juniors [to new skills and opportunities]. These are not helpful. Another exception is that of lucky individuals who just land into things as Head teachers after serving as caretakers in Seed schools for a few months. They have no experience. So not everyone assumes [the Head teacher] office with the necessary management preparation” (Interview, DHT-2).

Mitego’s sharing implies that an administrator’s experience as a Deputy Head teacher gives him/her adequate preparation (mentorship) for playing the Head teacher’s role, the two exceptions notwithstanding. Besides, Mitego saw other ways by which new school heads acquire management expertise. These help to counter the two wanting scenarios above.

“Some administrators take on formal courses in management when they are serving [as Head/Deputy head teachers]. They do Master’s [in education management] or certificates in Administration law. Other officers get expertise through try and error [sic] by gambling. The lucky ones succeed with it, while the unlucky ones get resentment from staff, students and even parents. This is learning by doing things as they come. For example, the ministry [MoES] transfers five of your 30 teachers without any replacement. What do you do? You try one solution after another until one of them works (Interview, DHT-2).

Mitego is a Master’s degree holder (Education management). He can easily see the difference such upgrading added to his management expertise.

On the second theme (‘particular post pre-service management preparation opportunities available in Uganda’), Mitego’s story had the following (Table 4).

**Table 4: Particular management preparation opportunities available in Kamuli District**

	DHT-2’s interview responses(verbatim)	Subthemes deciphered
1	“Deputy head teachers learn from Senior Head teachers. This is true with schools that have existed for a long time especially traditional schools like Catholic and Church of Uganda schools. They do it through their succession plans”.	Mentorship by senior administrators.
2	“Some schools have strong systems and cultures and policies that it’s up to the new entrant to fit in. Their systems are in such a way that there are clear duties for every individual and a certain mode of operation. This is very true with schools having a strong old student network or religious alignment”.	Mentorship from a strong school culture.
3	“For new schools (Seed schools) where all the staff appointed are fresh appointees including the head teacher and deputy, they gain expertise as they work. Many of them come from private settings and just change slowly and accordingly”.	Practice (trial and error).

4	<p>“Sometimes ASSHU Kamuli organises tooling and retooling workshops to train school administrators in certain management areas like finance and human resource management. The workshops are not regular. They are like once a year and last only about two hours. I found them somehow mean on content coverage” [ASSHU: Association of Secondary School Headteachers in Uganda].</p>	Workshops
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**Table 4** indicates that the management preparation opportunities available in the rural district of Kamuli are mentorship, trial and error, and workshops. Mitego’s critique of the content of ASSHU workshops might be informed by his Master’s degree qualifications.

Thirdly, Mitego indicated *how he went about meeting the demands of the Deputy Head teacher’s office for which he had she had probably received only remote / pre-service preparation*. He reported that,

*“I did several things. I consulted senior colleagues like my Head teacher and more experienced friends in other schools. The orientation given by my senior colleagues was very helpful. Some of these were not even substantive [Head teachers] but were more knowledgeable [than me] having either upgraded to better academic levels than their substantive counterparts or had had more practical exposure. There is also gambling or try and error [sic] and benchmarking from colleagues in other schools. Eventually I went to Makerere University for MEEM [Master of Education in Education Management]” (Interview, DHT-2).*

These revelations mean that a novice Deputy head teacher navigates the demands of his/her office by consulting supervisors and more experienced peers in other schools, trial and error (learning by doing), and benchmarking ‘best’ practices elsewhere. Mitego’s Masters qualifications did not deter him from consulting others, including peers. This suggests that even with upgrading, consultations remain key. The first study participant’s low regard for consultations might be explained by other reasons (including character), not necessarily upgrading.

Lastly, Mitego gave the following as ‘*the relative importance of different management preparation avenues*’ (theme 4).

*“Mentorship and upgrading were the most useful to me. Upgrading enabled me to get training from management experts [at Makerere University] let alone the other skills like computer, research skills, public presentation and speech that can be used to complement management. You don’t get such competences during workshops, which are most times money making. Other opportunities like try and error [sic] are risky. They lead to gross image damage to the victim and big losses to the institution should they backfire” (Interview, DHT-2).*

This sharing highlights the importance of both mentorship and upgrading. Of less value are workshops and trial and error (gambling), even though – in practice – these avenues exist.

### Participant 3: Ndagire (Head Teacher [HT])

On how new school administrators gain management expertise, Ndagire reported that,

*“They gain expertise by mentorship and sometimes [by] chance. Mentorship, the head teacher guides on what should be done or you learn from what the head teacher does. You consult by [phone] calling [your supervisor] about an issue or you use face-to-face during breaks. When I was deputy, my supervisors [head teachers] gave me very good mentorship. They gave me their time. Peer mentorship was also instrumental. Friends give practical help” (Interview, HT).*

Ndagire’s experiences highlight the importance of supervisor and peer mentorship in the acquisition of management expertise. To this, she added what she referred to as ‘chance of trial’.

*“Something happens, like two or three teachers repeatedly coming late or absenting themselves from work. You wonder what to do. You decide to try warning them. It doesn’t work. You reach them through their friends, and it works a bit. As an administrator, you accumulate expertise that way. It is like learning by chance of trial or learning by doing” (Interview, HT).*

On the particular post pre-service management preparation opportunities that are available in her district, Ndagire shook her head and said that:

*“I am not aware of any management preparation opportunities organized by Wakiso [District]. May be for primary school administrators. For us in secondary schools, the ministry [MoES] is the one responsible for us. When I was appointed Deputy Head teacher, the ministry gave us a two-day induction training. For groups that came after us they got five days of induction. We went through many things but being amateurs, we didn’t even understand them [at that time]. We understood later in the field when incidents came up” (Interview, HT).*

According to Ndagire, there are no management preparation opportunities organized by the district for secondary school administrators. However, the national level organizes induction training sessions for newly appointed school heads (annually). Ndagire’s failure to understand content during induction may be attributed to her being a novice administrator (at that time); but also to her Bachelor’s degree level of education. Perhaps a Master’s degree is needed.

Ndagire shared another management preparation opportunity, which she had experienced.

*“WAKISSHA [Wakiso Secondary School Head teachers’ Association] organises a meeting at the start of each term. Some issues on management may be raised there. Although ASSHU also organizes annual national workshops, it is expensive for us [Head teachers] to raise funds for transport, accommodation and feeding. The ministry sometimes sends someone to address us during these workshops. ASSHU’s motto is ‘United for professional and quality school leadership’” (Interview, HT).*

On how Ndagire practically went about meeting the demands of the Head teacher’s office for which she had probably received only remote / pre-service preparation, she explained that,



*“I consulted my supervisors and friends in my network. I asked colleagues who were head teachers how they handled particular issues” (Interview, HT).*

This narrative also points to supervisor and peer consultations (mentorship) as the coping mechanism adopted by school heads in navigating the demands of their new offices.

Finally, on *the relative importance of different management preparation avenues, she noted that:*

*“The single most instrumental platform that gave me management exposure was my work as Deputy Head teacher at... [S. S. in Kampala]. The school had a lot of confusion and conflicts. No order. I learnt a lot through the disorder. I had to be alert and creative. I would try this and that and see how things turn out. It was like gambling. You don't know if it will work. You try it. Where there is disorder there is more learning” (Interview, HT).*

Ndagire's experiences suggest that one's tenure as a Deputy head teacher is the most important management preparation avenue. The challenges one goes through as deputy, including trials, errors and gambles, make a critical difference. They constitute the problem-solving situations that Thorndike's theory espouses for grooming school administrators.

For workshops, Ndagire reports getting little value from them. However, she reiterates peer consultations as being of great help:

*“Workshops did not help me much. They are very formal and impersonal. But during tea and lunch break interactions [in workshops], I learnt much from the experiences of colleagues that freely shared information. One colleague taught me that if having dialogue with teachers who dodge lessons doesn't work, then withhold their transport allowance. If it doesn't work, meet them formally as admin team. If that fails, write to them, and then report to the district if no change comes. The district usually withholds their salary until the teachers get focused” (Interview, HT).*

To get a broader view of how secondary school administrators gain management expertise, I now put together the subthemes emerging from the separate experiences of the three key participants.

**Table 5: Participants' thematic convergences and divergences**

	Theme	Participant 1: Naluk	Participant 2: Mitego	Participant 3: Ndagire
1	<b>How new school administrators gain expertise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private arrangements e.g. benchmarking policy</li> <li>Board's mentorship</li> <li>Formal orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous administrative experience.</li> <li>Upgrading in management.</li> <li>Trial and error / gambling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor and peer mentorship</li> <li>Learning by chance.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Convergence:</b> Board and peer mentorship (participants 1 &amp; 3); chance / gambling (2&amp;3).</li> <li><b>Divergence:</b> Orientation; previous administrative experience; upgrading...</li> </ul>		

	Theme	Participant 1: Naluk	Participant 2: Mitego	Participant 3: Ndagire
2	Available post pre-service management preparation opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seminars and workshops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentorship by seniors and school culture</li> <li>Trial and error (gambling).</li> <li>Workshops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Induction training.</li> <li>Peer mentorship.</li> <li>WAKISSHA workshops.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Convergence:</b> Workshops; mentorship.</li> <li><b>Divergence:</b> Trial and error (gambling).</li> </ul>		
3	Navigating the demands of a new office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional culture</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation</li> <li>Orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisor/peer consultation</li> <li>Gambling (trial and error).</li> <li>Benchmarking elsewhere.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consulting supervisors and peers.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Convergence:</b> Consulting supervisors and peers (mentorship).</li> <li><b>Divergence:</b> Orientation; institutional culture; gambling (trial and error).</li> </ul>		
4	Avenue/s found most important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Induction (national).</li> <li>Policy mastery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentorship</li> <li>Upgrading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gambling as deputy head teacher.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Convergence:</b> None.</li> <li><b>Divergence:</b> Induction, policy mastery, mentorship, upgrading, gambling.</li> </ul>		

According to Table 5, first, the separate sharing by the three key participants (on *how new secondary school administrators gain management expertise in Uganda*) converges around two subthemes. One is mentorship (by board and one's peers). The other is 'learning by chance' (gambling). These discoveries suggest that new administrators acquire expertise largely informally – by consulting their 'significant others' (supervisors and senior peers) and by 'trying doing', i.e. by carrying out administrative business with a 'try and see what happens' kind of attitude. This aligns with Thorndike's learning by trial and error theory, which expects administrators to keep trying one alternative after another until they get to a solution (Aliakbari et al., 2015; Tulisa et al., 2016).

Mitego's identification of previous administrative experience as a key avenue for learning management corresponds with Okoko's (2018) view that the process of moving through the ranks gives administrators hands-on exposure that no other mode of management preparation can give. Thorndike's trial and error theory also values such exposure, as long as there is reflective involvement in solving given challenges (Behlol et al., 2010).

During group interview, the two education officers (DEO & DIS) noted that in the absence of management academic requirements for school headship in Uganda, school boards should be the ones to guide novice administrators.

*“In Uganda, no qualification is required to become a head teacher. Being a head teacher is only a promotion, not a qualification. However, Board of Governors [BOGs] have powers and responsibility to guide green head teachers and deputies.*

*For example, they [BOG] make priorities for any government-aided secondary school and approve or change budget allocations” (Education Officer, Group Interview).*

The second officer was quick to add that,

*“It is still a challenge because members of BOG are [themselves] not experienced and do not possess qualifications and this sometimes depends on the strength of the foundation body” (Education Officer, Group Interview).*

Education officers’ views suggest that, in many schools, novice school administrators find themselves left to struggle on their own – largely along lines of trial and error/ gambling. These findings imply that most new school administrators struggle alone on their own to learn school management. This agrees with Medford et al. (2022: 2) that “newly appointed principals suffer in silence”, struggling to make sense of their newly acquired roles. That is why Birkinshaw et al. (2022) and Medford et al. (2022) report a preponderance of trial-and-error schemes in many administrators’ school management practices.

The finding that in Uganda no formal qualification (beyond pre-service training) is required to become a head teacher reflects the MoES’s (2014: 3) report that “Head teachers are selected on the basis of their classroom experience and therefore generally lack leadership and managerial skills”. The finding is also in line with Bush (2008: 70) that “many nations still appoint their principals on the basis of a teaching qualification and teaching experience alone without regard to their leadership knowledge and skills”. KEMI disagrees with such a practice, arguing that “as valuable as prior college training is, it can never be driven fully towards training education personnel for specific positions within education management”. These considerations suggest that absence of formal management preparation prior to school headship negatively affects administrators’ performance.

Table 5 further reveals that the only post pre-service management preparation opportunity reported to be available by each of the three key participants is workshops. This means that management preparation workshops still exist in Uganda, however irregular. This finding agrees with MoES (2014), Oduro (2009) and Okoko (2018) that workshops and seminars are some of the capacity strengthening initiatives that are available to school administrators. Workshops aside, there are “limited opportunities for leadership development in the East African region” (Okoko, 2018: 4).

However, none of the participants reported workshops to be the most influential avenue in their own management expertise acquisition. I found this interesting. It might be due to the content of the workshops that some of the same participants reported to be quite theoretical; or due to the expenses involved (for transport for example). Education officers explained why workshops are only sporadic.

*“We do not have many [management preparation] opportunities because the government promises money for training, but it doesn’t provide it. But we always organize workshops for them at list (sic) once a term and tell them about government policies” (Group Interview, Education officers).*

For the third theme, the key participants individually agreed that novice administrators navigate the demands of their offices mainly by consulting supervisors and peers. This finding concurs with the finding on theme one (Table 5), where participants' voices converged around supervisor and peer mentorship. These findings point to availability of management mentorship in Uganda. This finding disagrees with Medford et al.'s (2022) assumption that opportunities for novice administrators' mentorship and coaching are few.

However, the three key participants disagreed on the real role of formal orientation, institutional culture, and gambling (trial and error) in assisting new administrators to navigate the demands of their offices. Supervisor and/or peer consultations seem to give new administrators only a bit of the guidance they need, leaving many thirsting for more (guidance). They decide to utilise other avenues such as institutional culture (tradition) and gambling for further guidance. According to Mestry (2017), new administrators behave that way "partly because they are inadequately prepared for their leadership position" (p. 1). Sepuru et al. (2020: 1) agrees, arguing that most novice school heads lack proficiency "in the areas of curriculum, human resources, school finance, stakeholder relations and interpretation of legislation". These areas deserve more attention during management preparation workshops.

The education officers lamented that many new school administrators prefer trial and error to reliance on official MoES policies.

*"Many keep on gambling in doing their work. They depend much on their thinking and many have done errors. They should follow the Education Act 2008. Sometimes they fail due to lack of reading culture. Most of them don't read the act. Education officers like inspectors usually remind such administrators but..." (Group Interview, Education officers).*

This means that the officers are also aware of existence of management by gambling practices although they disagree with them. Their position aligns with that of Mestry (2017) that "acquiring expertise can no longer be left to common sense and character alone" (Mestry, 2017: 2). Yet according to Birkinshaw et al. (2022) and Medford et al. (2022), trial-and-error gambling takes the lion's share of prevalence in school administrators' preparation. How effective is such preparation?

Lastly, Table 5 shows that no management preparation avenue is commonly agreed upon as being the most important. Each of the three key participants identified a different avenue. Whereas one highlighted induction and policy mastery, the other underscored mentorship and upgrading; and the third found gambling most helpful. These experiences imply that whereas mentorship is necessary for management preparation, it is not sufficient. New administrators supplement mentorship with gambling, policy guidelines, and/or formal upgrading. These views agree with Okoko (2018) that management proficiency is a hybrid of different kinds of experiences (avenues). In this line, Birkinshaw et al. (2022) suggests that proficiency enhancement programmes should be iterative (back-and-forth), experimental (trial and error), embedded in day-to-day work, supported by coaching, and hybrid in delivery.

The two education officers agreed on the importance of upgrading, including the need for

postgraduate qualifications in education management.

*“There should be a Master’s degree requirement to reduce existing management confusion in schools. If we have degrees for Head teachers in primary schools, for secondary schools head teachers should have a Master’s degree in management. However, we should also remember that sometimes management [ability] is inborn” (Group Interview, Education officers).*

These views confirm the saying that grace (education) builds on nature, hence the importance of both heredity (nature) and education (nurture) in one’s management proficiency acquisition. A Master’s degree in education leadership or management looks necessary but it does not negate the importance of other management preparation avenues such as mentorship. For upgrading, van der Westhuizen et al. (2007) remind us that administrators’ postgraduate qualifications in educational leadership / management can only make a difference if they form part of a national qualification policy.

## Conclusions

First, in Uganda, new secondary school administrators gain management expertise largely sporadically and casually. Most of the (post pre-service training) opportunities discovered by the study are available to new administrators by chance. These are opportunities such as workshops and peer mentorship. New administrators often find themselves navigating the demands of their offices by a kind of trial-and-error akin to gambling. If they eventually acquire management proficiency, it is largely by chance depending on each one’s school context as well as his/her supervisor’s exposure and goodwill. Although no single crosscutting preparation avenue was reported to be the most important, a need for regular induction workshops and mandatory specialist management training beyond the general pre-service programme was clear. Management proficiency is so important in school administration that leaving its acquisition to chance is to miss the point.

Second, the way trial and error manifests itself among school administrators in Uganda makes it ineffective in preparing administrators for their school management roles. Like the scientific method in general, trial and error is effective only if it is practiced by knowledgeable people. This implies that, before their appointment as school heads, administrators-to-be first undergo specialist management education and training under formal settings, such as Faculties of education. The knowledge and skills they acquire from there enable them to carry out trial and error in an informed way. In contrast, the largely uninformed way in which school administrators carry out trial and error in Uganda is tantamount to gambling (chance). Such is not the kind of trial and error advocated for by Thorndike’s theory.

## Recommendations

The MoES should require postgraduate education and training qualifications in Education administration, leadership and management for everyone interested in accessing school administration at the secondary school level. The minimum qualifications should be a

Master's degree (for Head teachers) and a Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) (for deputies). The qualifications may be given by UNITE (Uganda National Institute of Teacher Education) and/or other accredited tertiary institutions. Since in Uganda it is becoming mandatory for every classroom teacher to have a Bachelor's degree, it is reasonable that administrators have Master's and PGDs among other requirements.

The MoES should organize formal induction workshops for newly appointed school administrators before they assume office. This will help to give the administrators up-to-date management preparation instead of leaving training to chance or to the mercy and exposure of their supervisors. The workshops should be bi-annual, take place in the four different regions of the country (to reduce transport costs), and each last for at least one week for greater impact.

### *Contribution and further research*

The study unveils the different avenues by which secondary school administrators actually learn to run schools. It also suggests policy directions to take in school management preparation. However, as is common with all case study research, this study is limited by a lack of external validity (for generalization). More so, this case study's basic methodology was poised on social constructivism, which limits itself to "local rather than universal meanings and practices; focusses on provisional rather than essential patterns of meaning construction" (Boyland, 2019: 31). There is need for wide-ranging survey research to take up the management preparation narrative from where the current study has dropped it. The survey research (positivist) together with the current case study (post-positivist) will be reinforcing each other, for example by employing an exploratory sequential design.

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