

School Environment and Student Engagement in Universal Secondary Education Schools in  
Tororo District, Uganda

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**Declaration**

I Sylvia Awori, hereby declare that this is my original work, and has not been, to the best of my knowledge, presented for any award in any other University or Institution of learning.

Signature: SA

Date: 21/09/2018

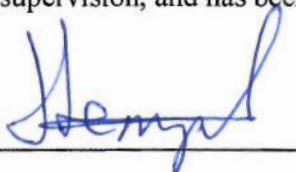
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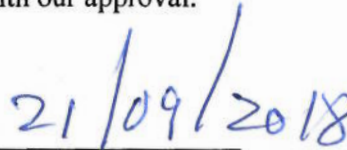
**Approval**

This dissertation titled "*School Environment and Student Engagement in Universal Secondary Education Schools in Tororo District*" was written by Sylvia Awori under our guidance and supervision, and has been submitted with our approval.

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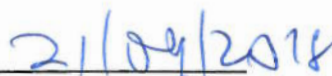
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### **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my husband for the love, care and financial support he offered to me throughout this journey, my children Samantha, Shanice, Andrew and Stephanie who always inspired me to keep moving forward, lastly not the least, my father and mother whose continued guidance and prayers enabled to me sail through the challenges that I encountered.

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### List of Acronyms

BOG	Board of governors
USE	Universal Secondary Education
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
UNESCO	United Nation Education Social and Cultural Organization
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
UNEB	Uganda National Examination Board

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### Abstract

Student engagement in relation to teaching and learning has been of concern in education for improvement and better teaching learning outcomes. This study examined student engagement in relation to school environment in the universal secondary education (USE) schools in Tororo district. The Flow theory advanced by Csikzentmihalyi was used to explain school environment-student engagement interplay. Using a cross-section survey, 402 students were randomly selected with eight purposively selected teachers as participants in the study. School environment measurement scale,  $\alpha = .84$ ; and student engagement in schools questionnaire (SESQ)  $\alpha = .82$ ; were adopted for the study. The results revealed a good state of physical, instructional materials and social environment in USE schools in Tororo district. Though government needed to invest more in the physical and instructional materials to make it better. The students in USE schools reported high levels of engagement and there was positive significant correlation ( $r = .401, p < .01$ ) between school environment and student engagement. Thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed that, students were engaged during lessons, teachers used different techniques like question and answer, group discussions and class exercise. Conversely on physical environment, two teacher's revealed that the space in the laboratories and classrooms were not enough and had no lighting. In conclusion the state of school environment was good with high student engagement which also indicated a positive relationship between school environment and student engagement. The study recommends that teachers should guide students on how to use the text books and be friendly during teaching and learning session. Government should invest more on expansion of existing laboratories, provide adequate instructional materials, school administrators should ensure maintenance and supervision of the teaching and learning process in order to realize optimal engagement of students.

**Key words:** school environment; student engagement; secondary education

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

This chapter reviews the background, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, hypothesis significance and scope of the study and conceptual frame work.

### **Background to the Study**

Environmental factors are fundamental for any growth and development of an individual and society at large (Patrick & Ryan, 2003). For academic growth and development, this observation is equally vital, schools therefore need to provide an environment that is appropriate for teaching and learning. Education is pivotal in development and it is more critical in society today than ever before, as conventional paths to success, especially economic stability dependent upon certain levels of educational attainment (Povey, Kate, Willis, & Haynes, 2016). This Education needs to be provided in a conducive environment where students are maximally engaged to achieve the goals for such education. Educational goals and objectives may not be achieved very well if there is no student engagement in the education processes, especially during teaching and learning (Everett, 2015). Student engagement, refers not only to the academic achievement, motivation, and commitment that students demonstrate within their school (both in and out of the classroom context), but also to the psychological connection, comfort, and sense of belonging that students feel towards their school, their peers and their teachers (London, Downey, & Mace, 2007).

Student engagement has been a topic of concern and has been viewed as an issue affecting students in higher education only (Jennings & Angelo, 2006). Studying student engagement in secondary level is also important in the contemporary time as lower education builds the foundation for higher education, implying that poor lower education background may translate into poor higher education and lifelong outcomes. These outcomes include

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