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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN IN UGANDA AND THE USA: INSIGHTS FROM NAKASEKE DISTRICT, UGANDA, AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN CHELSEA, MASSACHUSETTS

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ABSTRACT

This study presented a comparative analysis of the educational needs of underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA. The research aimed to assess the educational challenges faced by children in these regions and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, with the goal of informing policies and practices to reduce educational disparities. A cross-sectional research design and quantitative approach were employed, with stratified random sampling used to include key stakeholders and purposive sampling to select schools and educational centers serving underprivileged populations. The findings revealed that while both regions faced challenges such as inadequate learning resources, teacher-student ratios, and socio-economic barriers, these issues were more pronounced in Uganda, where the digital divide further hindered students' academic and career readiness. In contrast, students in the USA benefited from stronger government and NGO support, better infrastructure, and more equitable access to quality education. To address these disparities, the study called for collaborative efforts between governments, NGOs, and international stakeholders to promote inclusive and sustainable educational development. Strengthening partnerships and implementing targeted interventions could bridge the educational gap, foster global educational equity, and create long-term positive impacts for marginalized children in both regions.

KEYWORDS: *Educational needs, educational disparities, learning resources, teacher-student ratio,*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the most potent instruments for influencing people's and societies' futures is the educational system, which is also seen as the foundation of social justice and economic growth (2014). Nevertheless, according to UNESCO, the issue of impoverished children's access to high-quality education is particularly severe for those from underrepresented groups in society. The resources and facilities that have been developed are utilized in developing nations, and the disparities in learning and opportunities have a greater impact on the rural education areas of children from low-income families in Uganda, such as Nakaseke (World Bank, 2018). States (Uganda of Bureau America of including Statistics, Chelsea 2016) have many barriers to education, but Massachusetts has urban education in 2020. Concerns about educational inequality (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Access to quality education for underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underprivileged communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA, remains a complex issue characterized by large differences in educational resources, infrastructure, and support systems. The main factors contributing to this problem include social and economic barriers such as poverty, poor educational facilities, and limited access to learning materials, which reduce academic success and prevent the future opportunities of these children (UNESCO, 2021; O' Neill, 2022). Despite efforts by governments and non-governmental organizations to provide funding, resources, and support programs aimed at addressing educational inequality, many children still face significant barriers to their educational development (World Bank, 2020; Brown & Schmidt, 2023). If these differences are not properly addressed, the long-term consequences may include a cycle of poverty, a decline in labor organization, and the failure to encourage skilled workers, differences that can contribute to economic and social development, and ultimately undermine the growth and stability of the nation. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

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3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.1 Main Objective

The main objective of this research was to assess the educational needs of underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA, in order to develop tailored strategies that improve access to quality education and promote academic success in these regions.

3.2 Specific Objectives

i. To assess the access to educational resources available to underprivileged children in Nakaseke District and underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts.
ii. To compare the quality of provided to underprivileged children in both Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underserved areas of Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA.
iii. To examine the socio-economic challenges that affect the educational opportunities of underprivileged children in both locations.
iv. To identify the role of government and non-governmental support programs in addressing the educational needs of underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and in underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional research design and a quantitative approach to assess the educational needs of underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA. The target population included primary school teachers and school administrators from selected schools in both locations, with a total of 180 respondents in Uganda and 120 in the USA. Using the Krejcie and Morgan table, the sample sizes were determined as 122 for Uganda and 92 for the USA to ensure statistical power and reliability. Stratified random sampling was applied to include different key stakeholders, while purposive sampling was used to select schools and educational centers catering to underprivileged populations. Data collection relied on a structured online questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, assessing factors such as the availability of learning materials, teacher quality, and classroom resources. In Uganda, where internet access was limited, face-to-face data collection was conducted using laptops and mobile devices to enhance participation, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive study.

Table 1: Population distribution

Respondents	Uganda	USA (Chelsea, Massachusetts, Daniella Education Center and similar programs)
Teachers	150	100
School administrators	30	20
Total	180	120

Primary data 2023

5.0 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

5.1 To assess the access to educational resources available to underprivileged children in Nakaseke District and underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts.

Findings on assessing the access to educational resources (e.g., textbooks, technology, and infrastructure) available to underprivileged children in Nakaseke District and underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts were captured and results are evidenced below,

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Table 2: Access to Educational Resources

Question	Response Option	Uganda (n = 122)		USA (n = 92)	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
How often do students have access to adequate textbooks for all subjects?	Always	20	16.40%	10	10.90%
	Often	35	28.70%	20	21.70%
	Sometimes	40	32.80%	35	38.00%
	Rarely	15	12.30%	15	16.30%
	Never	12	9.80%	12	13.00%
Do students have access to computers or tablets for learning purposes at school?	Yes, every day	10	8.20%	18	19.60%
	Yes, A Few Times Per Week	20	16.40%	30	32.60%
	Yes, Occasionally	25	20.50%	15	16.30%
	No, Rarely	40	32.80%	20	21.70%
	No, Never	27	22.10%	9	9.80%
Is internet access available for students in the classroom?	Yes, Always	8	6.60%	15	16.30%
	Yes, Only In Certain Areas	20	16.40%	20	21.70%
	Yes, But Often Unreliable	25	20.50%	20	21.70%
	No, Rarely Available	35	28.70%	20	21.70%
	No, Never Available	34	27.90%	17	18.50%
How would you rate the overall quality of school infrastructure?	Excellent	10	8.20%	8	8.70%
	Good	20	16.40%	18	19.60%
	Average	35	28.70%	25	27.20%
	Poor	40	32.80%	30	32.60%
	Very Poor	17	13.90%	11	12.00%
Are there enough teachers for the number of students in each class?	More Than Enough	8	6.60%	12	13.00%
	Adequate Number	35	28.70%	30	32.60%
	Barely Enough	40	32.80%	20	21.70%
	Not Enough	25	20.50%	20	21.70%
	Severely Lacking	14	11.50%	10	10.90%

Source: ***Primary data 2023***

In Uganda, access to essential learning resources is a significant challenge, with only 16.4% of students having consistent access to adequate textbooks, compared to 10.9% in the USA. While 28.7% of Ugandan students report "often" having access to textbooks, a significant portion (22.1%) still face "rarely" or "never" having textbooks, which may severely impact learning due to limited alternative resources. The lack of access to digital tools is also evident in Uganda, where only 8.2% of students have daily access to computers or tablets, compared to 19.6% in the USA. Internet access in classrooms is another area of disparity, with only 6.6% of Ugandan students reporting "always" available internet, compared to 16.3% in the USA, further exacerbating the digital divide. Poor school infrastructure in Uganda, where 32.8% of students rate it as "poor," coupled with inadequate teacher availability, with 32.8% of Ugandan students feeling there are "barely enough" teachers, further diminishes the quality of education. These challenges highlight the need for urgent interventions to improve resource access, infrastructure, and teacher availability in Uganda, ensuring a more equitable educational experience for all students.

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5.2 Comparing the quality of education provided to underprivileged children in both Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underserved areas of Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA.

Findings on comparing the quality of education provided to underprivileged children in both Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underserved areas of Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA.

Table 3: The Quality of education

Question	Response Option	Uganda (n = 122)		USA (n = 92)	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
What is the highest Qualification of most teachers in the school?	Master's Degree or higher	10	8.20%	20	21.70%
	Bachelor's degree	45	36.90%	40	43.50%
	Diploma or associate degree	50	41.00%	20	21.70%
	Certificate	15	12.30%	8	8.70%
	No formal teaching qualification	2	1.60%	4	4.30%
How would you rate the student-to-teacher ratio in classrooms?	Very low (fewer than 15)	5	4.10%	12	13.00%
	Low(15-25 students)	15	12.30%	35	38.00%
	Moderate (25-35 students)	25	20.50%	25	27.20%
	High(35-45 students)	40	32.80%	15	16.30%
	Very high (over 45 students)	37	30.30%	5	5.40%
Do teachers receive ongoing professional development training?	Yes, frequently	10	8.20%	30	32.60%
	Yes, occasionally	20	16.40%	25	27.20%
	Yes, but rarely	50	41.00%	20	21.70%
	No, not at all	35	28.70%	10	10.90%
	Unsure	7	5.70%	7	7.60%
How aligned are the curriculum standards with national or regional guidelines?	Fully aligned	5	4.10%	18	19.60%
	Mostly aligned	20	16.40%	35	38.00%
	Partially aligned	50	41.00%	20	21.70%
	Rarely aligned	30	24.60%	12	13.00%
	Not aligned at all	17	13.90%	7	7.60%
How often is the curriculum updated to Meet current educational and skill needs?	Every 1-2 years	5	4.10%	20	21.70%
	Every 3-5 years	15	12.30%	30	32.60%
	Every 5-10 years	35	28.70%	20	21.70%
	Rarely updated	40	32.80%	15	16.30%
	Never updated	27	22.10%	7	7.60%
Are learning Assessments conducted to measure students' understanding of the curriculum?	Yes, frequently	10	8.20%	25	27.20%
	Yes, occasionally	20	16.40%	35	38.00%
	Yes, but rarely	40	32.80%	15	16.30%
	No, not at all	40	32.80%	10	10.90%
	Unsure	12	9.80%	7	7.60%

Source: ***Primary data 2023***

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In Uganda, education faces significant challenges, including lower teacher qualifications, with only 8.2% of teachers holding a master's degree compared to 21.7% in the USA, and a reliance on teachers with diplomas or associate degrees (41.0%) rather than bachelor's degrees (36.9%) as in the U.S. This is compounded by larger student-to-teacher ratios, which hinder personalized attention, as only 4.1% of Ugandan classrooms have fewer than 15 students per teacher, compared to 13.0% in the USA. Additionally, Ugandan teachers have limited access to professional development (8.2% receive frequent training), impacting their ability to adapt to new educational methods. The curriculum in Uganda also faces alignment and update challenges, with only 4.1% reporting full alignment with national guidelines and a slow pace of updates (32.8% rarely updated), which leaves students underprepared. Furthermore, learning assessments are infrequent in Uganda, with 32.8% of schools conducting them rarely or not at all, compared to 27.2% of U.S. schools that assess frequently. These disparities suggest that Ugandan students face barriers to quality education, from underqualified teachers to limited learning assessments, which negatively impact their academic progress.

5.3 The socio-economic challenges that affect the educational opportunities of underprivileged children in both locations.

Findings on the socio-economic challenges that affect the educational opportunities of underprivileged children in both locations were captured and results are evidenced below

Table 4: Socio-economic challenges that affect the educational opportunities

Question	Response Option	Uganda (n= 122)		USA (n =92)	
		Frequency	Column %	Frequency	Column %
How often do students miss school due to financial difficulties?	Very frequently	40	32.80%	5	5.40%
	Frequently	30	24.60%	10	10.90%
	Occasionally	25	20.50%	20	21.70%
	Rarely	15	12.30%	30	32.60%
	Never	12	9.80%	27	29.30%
Are students provided with meals during school hours?	Yes, both Breakfast and lunch	20	16.40%	60	65.20%
	Yes, lunch only	25	20.50%	20	21.70%
	Yes, breakfast only	10	8.20%	5	5.40%
	No, meals are not provided	60	49.20%	5	5.40%
	Unsure	7	5.70%	2	2.20%
How would you rate the prevalence of health issues (e.g., frequent illness) among students?	Very high	30	24.60%	5	5.40%
	High	40	32.80%	15	16.30%
	Moderate	30	24.60%	40	43.50%
	Low	15	12.30%	20	21.70%
	Very low	7	5.70%	12	13.00%
Are students able to afford basic school supplies (e.g., uniforms, books, stationery)?	Yes, most Students can Afford all supplies	5	4.10%	30	32.60%
	Yes, but only some can afford all supplies	15	12.30%	25	27.20%
	Most can afford Only some supplies	30	24.60%	25	27.20%
	Few can afford supplies	40	32.80%	7	7.60%
	None can afford supplies	32	26.20%	5	5.40%
How often do students experience food insecurity that affects their ability to focus in school?	Very frequently	50	41.00%	10	10.90%
	Frequently	40	32.80%	15	16.30%
	Occasionally	20	16.40%	25	27.20%
	Rarely	7	5.70%	25	27.20%

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	Never	5	4.10%	17	18.50%
Do students have access to healthcare services that support their well-being and school attendance?	Yes, regular and accessible healthcare	10	8.20%	35	38.00%
	Yes, but Healthcare is limited	20	16.40%	40	43.50%
	Rarely accessible	50	41.00%	10	10.90%
	Not accessible at all	40	32.80%	5	5.40%
	Unsure	2	1.60%	2	2.20%

Source: ***Primary data 2023***

In Uganda, 32.8% of students frequently missed school due to financial difficulties, while only 5.4% of U.S. students faced the same issue. Financial hardship significantly hindered regular attendance in Uganda. Regarding school meals, only 16.4% of Ugandan students received both breakfast and lunch, while 65.2% of U.S. students did. In Uganda, the lack of meal programs affected students' concentration and performance. Health issues were more prevalent in Uganda, with 24.6% reporting very high health challenges compared to 5.4% in the U.S. Limited healthcare access in Uganda worsened student health and attendance. Only 4.1% of Ugandan students could afford all necessary school supplies, while 32.6% of U.S. students could. The affordability issue in Uganda impeded learning. Food insecurity affected 41.0% of Ugandan students' focus, whereas only 10.9% of U.S. students faced this challenge. Lastly, 8.2% of Ugandan students had regular healthcare access, compared to 38.0% in the USA, impacting their academic performance.

5.4 To identify the role of government and non-governmental support programs in addressing the educational needs of underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and in underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA.

Findings on the role of government and non-governmental support programs in addressing the educational needs of underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and in underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA were captured and results are evidenced below

Table 5: The role of government and non-governmental support programs in addressing the educational needs

Question	Response Option	Uganda (n = 122)		USA (n = 92)	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Are there government- funded programs that Provide educational Support to Under privileged children in your community?	Yes, several programs	10	8.20%	30	32.60%
	Yes, a few programs	20	16.40%	30	32.60%
	Yes,but very limited support	40	32.80%	15	16.30%
	No, none available	42	34.40%	10	10.90%
	Unsure	10	8.20%	7	7.60%
How effective are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Providing educational Resources (e.g.,books, supplies)to	Very effective	5	4.10%	25	27.20%
	Somewhat	20	16.40%	35	38.00%

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underprivileged children?	effective				
	Moderately effective	35	28.70%	20	21.70%
	Slightly effective	40	32.80%	7	7.60%
	Not effective at all	22	18.00%	5	5.40%
How frequently do schools receive Government funding specifically aimed at supporting underprivileged students?	Very frequently	5	4.10%	30	32.60%
	Frequently	10	8.20%	35	38.00%
	Occasionally	20	16.40%	20	21.70%
	Rarely	40	32.80%	5	5.40%
	Never	47	38.50%	2	2.20%
Do government or NGO programs offer scholarships or financial assistance to students in need?	Yes, many students receive assistance	5	4.10%	40	43.50%
	Yes, but only a Few students benefit	15	12.30%	25	27.20%
	Yes, but Assistance is very limited	30	24.60%	20	21.70%
	No, assistance is not available	60	49.20%	5	5.40%
	Unsure	12	9.80%	2	2.20%
Are there government- sponsored initiatives to improve school facilities (e.g.,classrooms, sanitation) in your community?	Yes, frequently	5	4.10%	30	32.60%
	Yes, occasionally	10	8.20%	35	38.00%
	Rarely	40	32.80%	20	21.70%
	No, never	60	49.20%	7	7.60%
	Unsure	7	5.70%	0	0.00%
How well do support programs address health- related needs (e.g., school-based health services, nutrition programs) for underprivileged children?	Very well	5	4.10%	30	32.60%
	Somewhat well	15	12.30%	35	38.00%
	Moderately well	25	20.50%	20	21.70%
	Slightly well	40	32.80%	5	5.40%
	Not at all well	37	30.30%	2	2.20%

Source: Primary Data

In Uganda, 8.2% of respondents reported several government-funded educational programs, while 34.4% noted no support at all, reflecting insufficient educational aid. In contrast, the USA showed more robust support, with 32.6% reporting several programs. Ugandans also found NGOs less effective in providing educational resources, with only 4.1% rating them as very effective. Meanwhile, 27.2% of U.S. respondents found NGOs highly impactful. Government funding for underprivileged students was rare in Uganda, with only 4.1% receiving it very frequently, compared to 32.6% in the USA. Scholarships and financial aid were limited in Uganda, where 49.2% reported no support, while 43.5% of U.S. students received aid. Similarly, school facilities in Uganda saw minimal government investment, with 49.2% reporting no improvement initiatives, whereas U.S. schools had more frequent upgrades. Health-related support was also limited in Uganda, leaving many students with unmet health needs that hindered their learning.

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Assessing Access to Educational Resources

This research highlights critical disparities in access to educational resources for underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA. While both regions face challenges with textbook availability and school infrastructure, access to digital resources remains significantly lower in Uganda. Limited access to computers, tablets, and reliable internet connectivity hinders

Ugandan students from acquiring essential technological skills necessary for modern workforce integration (UNESCO, 2021). Additionally, the higher teacher-student ratios in Uganda create obstacles to individualized learning, unlike the more manageable ratios in Chelsea (World Bank, 2020). Addressing these disparities aligns with the U.S. national interest in promoting global education access and workforce preparedness. Sustainable partnerships can drive impactful strategies to improve educational equity, yielding long-term benefits through enhanced global education standards and future collaborations (OECD, 2022).

6.2 Comparing the Quality of Education

This research identifies key differences in the quality of education for underprivileged children in Nakaseke District and Chelsea, Massachusetts. In the U.S., smaller class sizes, teacher qualifications, and continuous professional development create a more adaptive education system that meets national standards (NCES, 2021). In contrast, Uganda faces challenges such as inadequate teacher training, large class sizes, and outdated curricula, which impede student academic and career readiness (MoES Uganda, 2020). These disparities emphasize the need for global efforts to improve educational systems, fostering human capital development and international educational partnerships. Implementing long-term strategies to address these gaps promotes sustainable development and enhances cross-cultural exchange, ultimately improving global education standards (UNDP, 2021).

6.3 Socio-Economic Challenges Affecting Education

This research underscores socio-economic challenges impacting educational opportunities in Nakaseke District and Chelsea. Financial barriers, inadequate school meals, and limited healthcare services significantly hinder learning outcomes for Ugandan students, whereas U.S. students benefit from stronger social support systems that create a more conducive learning environment (UNICEF, 2020). The inability to afford tuition, school supplies, and transport in Uganda exacerbates educational disparities (World Bank, 2019). This research highlights the importance of policies addressing these inequalities, aligning with global efforts to improve access to quality education. Enhancing social support programs for vulnerable students can contribute to equitable educational opportunities and improve long-term academic success (Brookings Institution, 2022).

6.4 Government and NGO Support in Education

Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in addressing educational needs in Nakaseke District and Chelsea. In the U.S., well-funded programs provide scholarships, infrastructure improvements, and healthcare initiatives, creating an enabling environment for student success (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Conversely, Uganda struggles with inconsistent government funding and limited NGO effectiveness in addressing educational gaps (MoES Uganda, 2019). Strengthening partnerships between the U.S. and Ugandan education systems can promote knowledge exchange and resource-sharing to mitigate disparities. By aligning with global educational equity initiatives, this research advocates for policies supporting underprivileged students and fostering sustainable international collaboration (World Economic Forum, 2022).

7.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research highlighted significant disparities in educational access, quality, socio-economic challenges, and institutional support between underprivileged children in Nakaseke District, Uganda, and underserved communities in Chelsea, Massachusetts, USA. While both regions face challenges such as inadequate learning resources, the digital divide, teacher-student ratios, and socio-economic barriers are more pronounced in Uganda, limiting students' academic and career readiness. In contrast, U.S. students benefit from stronger government and NGO support, better infrastructure, and more equitable access to quality education. Addressing these disparities requires collaborative efforts between governments, non-governmental organizations, and international stakeholders to foster inclusive and sustainable educational development. By strengthening partnerships and implementing targeted interventions, we can bridge the educational gap, promote global educational equity, and create long-term positive impacts for marginalized children in both regions.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance access to educational resources, partnerships with technology firms and NGOs should provide affordable digital tools, such as computers, tablets, and internet connectivity, particularly in Nakaseke District. Strengthening teacher training programs through collaborations with U.S. institutions can improve instructional quality, ensuring educators in Uganda receive ongoing professional development and access to modern teaching methodologies. Additionally, exchange programs between educators and policymakers from both regions can facilitate the sharing of best practices, ultimately enhancing educational equity.

Improving school infrastructure in Uganda through development partnerships will create safer learning

environments, while targeted policies on scholarships and financial aid can ensure greater educational access for disadvantaged students in both locations. Addressing high student-teacher ratios in Uganda by increasing investments in teacher recruitment can improve learning outcomes.

Socio-economic challenges like food insecurity and healthcare access must also be tackled through school meal programs and school-based healthcare services. Furthermore, scholarship initiatives and supply donation programs should be expanded to reduce financial barriers.

Comparative research on global education disparities will also provide evidence-based strategies for sustainable educational improvements in both Uganda and the U.S.

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