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# Analysis of Economic Factors Responsible For School Dropout in Rural Universal Secondary Schools of Western Uganda

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to analyze the economic factors that are responsible for school drop out of Universal Secondary Schools in Uganda. The research was carried out from twenty five USE schools in Western Uganda. The schools were chosen because they are government aided (carrying out Universal Secondary Education program). All these schools are day schools, normally such schools where children of the poverty stricken peasants go to because of the inability to meet the high costs of boarding schools. Therefore, they portrayed a fair picture on the research problem. The study was guided by the following objectives; to find out whether parents do provide their children with scholastic materials like books, pens; to establish whether most students have lunch at school in USE schools; to find out whether charging fees influences students drop out in USE schools in Western Uganda and to find out whether students drop out of school because of child labor. A descriptive cross sectional survey research design was adopted with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to collect, present and interpret data as a way of enhancing the quality of the findings of the study. Conclusions and recommendations are highlighted.

**Key words:** Universal Secondary Education, Economic factors

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## I. Introduction

In 2007, Uganda became the first country in sub Saharan Africa to introduce Universal Secondary Education coming 10 years after it introduced universal primary education. At the time, a UN report said Africa had the worst secondary school enrolment rates in the world with only 34% of secondary school age children enrolled in school. The main reason given was financial and cultural constraints. The Ugandan government became committed to USE as reflected by the improved budgetary allocations to the education sector. This resulted into an increment in secondary school enrolment from 2.7 million students in 2008 to 5.3 million in 2010 and to 7.1 million in 2013. This suggests that Uganda is on the verge of attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in as far as access is concerned. However, much as secondary school enrolment has been a success, the concern now is with regard to the internal efficiency of secondary education that is the ability to retain students until they complete secondary school.

Between 2007 (year of inception) and 2008, the sector registered a dropout rate of 2.1 % (both males and females) of the expected 40,654 students. The sector continued to register increasing rates of drop outs; that is 7.2% males and 7.5% females in 2009, 12.5% males and 13.6% girls in 2010, 9.5% males and 10.4% females in 2011 and 11.3% and 14.3% females in 2012 dropped out of USE schools in Uganda (MOES, 2012). Notably, the first Cohort of USE completion rate was 74.1% an implication that 25.9% on the first cohort did not complete the USE program.

The Ministry of Finance Planning and Education Development (2007) reported that half of the households with children who have dropped out of school cite lack of money as the main problem to pay for lunch and building project funds, to buy uniforms and textbooks” but books and uniform cost more than fees. School dropout face a difficult time in life; they are more likely to be unemployed and impoverished, compared to their colleagues who continued schooling.

The problem of drop out is thus disquieting to policy makers since it partly reflects the inadequacy of a schooling system in terms of either school quality or quantity. Notably, school dropouts are usually associated with chronically high unemployment levels, low earnings, and poor health outcomes (McNeal 2009), and persistent poverty among certain segments of society (Chernichovsky, 2015).

#### Mean and Standard deviation of economic factors responsible for school dropout

The researcher sought to find out the mean and standard deviation of the respondents’ views in the research study on economic factors responsible for school dropout.

Table1 Mean and Standard Deviation of the Economic Factors Responsible for School Dropout in Universal Secondary Schools in Western Uganda.

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Parents do provide enough scholastic materials	800	2.26	0.98
Most students do have lunch at school	800	2.92	1.01
Charging fees influence school dropout	800	2.05	1.11
Students drop out of school because of child labor	800	2.03	1.11
Valid N (list wise)	800		

Source: primary data

The results in table 1 shows a moderate agreement of respondents on whether parents do provide their children with enough scholastic materials with a mean ( $M = 2.26$ ) and standard deviation of ( $SD = 0.98$ ).

The results in table 1 shows that a low number of children do have lunch at school with a mean of ( $M = 2.92$ ) and standard deviation of ( $SD = 1.01$ ).

The results in table 1 shows a moderate agreement of respondents that charging fees influences school dropout in universal secondary schools with a mean of ( $M = 2.05$ ) and standard deviation of ( $SD = 1.11$ ).

The results in table 1 shows that there is a moderate agreement that students drop out of school to involve in other economic activities like agricultural activities with a mean of ( $M = 2.03$ ) and standard deviation of ( $SD = 1.11$ ). This agrees with Blunch & Verner, 2010 who said that Poverty is often promoted as a driving factor pushing children to child labor and leading to drop out, other studies state it as inability to go to school, as opposed to dropping out of school in order to work. Similarly, World Bank (2010) reported that poorer households with fewer physical assets may increase high labor supply, with women and children often called upon.

Schooling costs, such as fees and other more indirect costs impact on household decisions to access education. Not only do school fees lead to under-enrollment and drop out, they also limit attendance at school (Mukudi, 2014) and lead to temporally withdrawals.

In the study of child poverty in different parts of Uganda by (Nakanyike et al. 2012), emphasizes lack of investment in education particularly by illiterate parents who do not value education as well as an official charges in USE schools imposed on poor parents to be the major reasons for dropping out of secondary

schools.

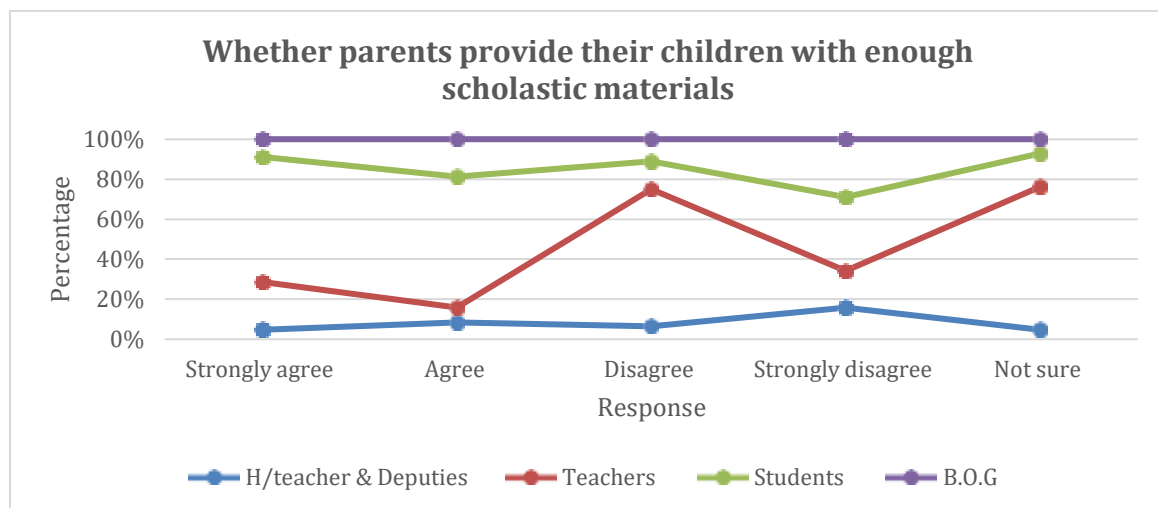
**Whether parents do provide enough scholastic materials to their children.**

The study sought to find out whether parents provided their children with scholastic materials like books, pens; the findings are presented in table 2.

**Table 2 Showing whether Parents do Provide their Children with enough Scholastic Materials.**

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY OF RESPONDENTS				TOTAL Frequency	Percentage
	H/teacher & Deputies	Teachers	Students	B.O.G		
Strongly agree	08	40	105	15	168	21.0%
Agree	28	25	220	63	336	42.0%
Disagree	14	148	30	24	216	27.0%
Strongly disagree	06	07	14	11	38	4.8%
Not sure	02	30	07	03	42	5.2%
Total					800	100

Source: primary data.



On whether parents do provide enough scholastic materials to their children, table 2 indicates that a cumulative majority 63% of the respondents agreed that most parents do provide enough scholastic materials to their children, 31.8% disagreed, while 5.2% were not sure.

It was also observed that some children did not have pens, books, calculators and rulers.

**Whether most students do have lunch at school.**

The researcher sought to find out whether most students have lunch at school in USE schools and the findings are presented in table 3 below;

Table 3 showing whether students do have lunch at school:-

RESPONSE	RESPONDENTS CATEGORIES.				Total	Percentage %
	H/teachers & Deputies	Teachers	Students	BOG	Frequency	
Strongly agree	07	33	42	08	90	11.3
Agree	10	66	98	13	187	23.4
Disagree	24	100	89	47	260	32.5
Strongly disagree	06	56	160	21	243	30.4
Not sure	03	10	02	05	20	2.5
<b>Totals</b>					<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data.

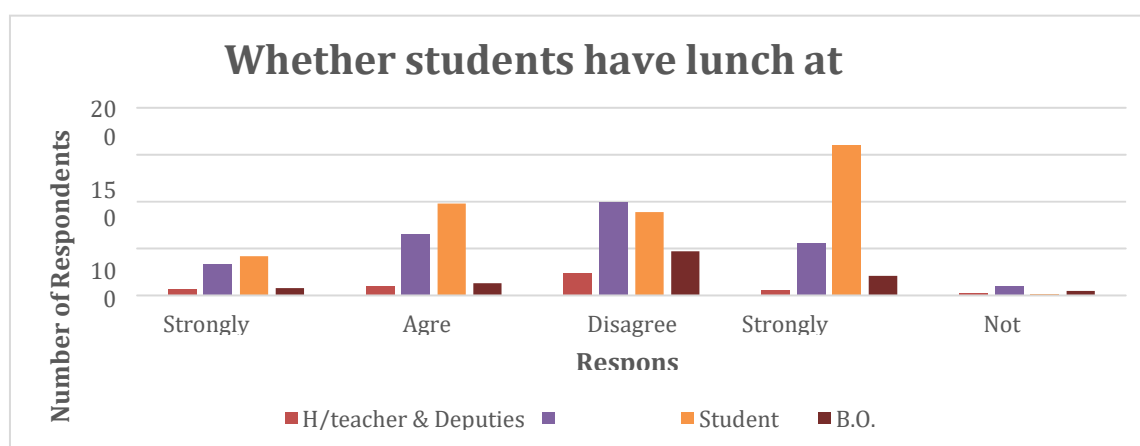


Table 3 above indicates that a cumulative majority of 62.9% of the respondents disagreed that students do have lunch at school, 34.7% agreed and while 2.5% of the respondents were not sure. The majority 62.9% implies that parents claimed that the government has to feed the children at school and the lack of awareness of their role in terms of feeding their children at school, therefore there is more need for the government to further sensitize these parents on their role of providing meals (lunch) to their children at school and on the contribution of the meals to the academic performance of their children and hence reducing on school dropout.

#### Whether charging additional fees at school influence school dropout.

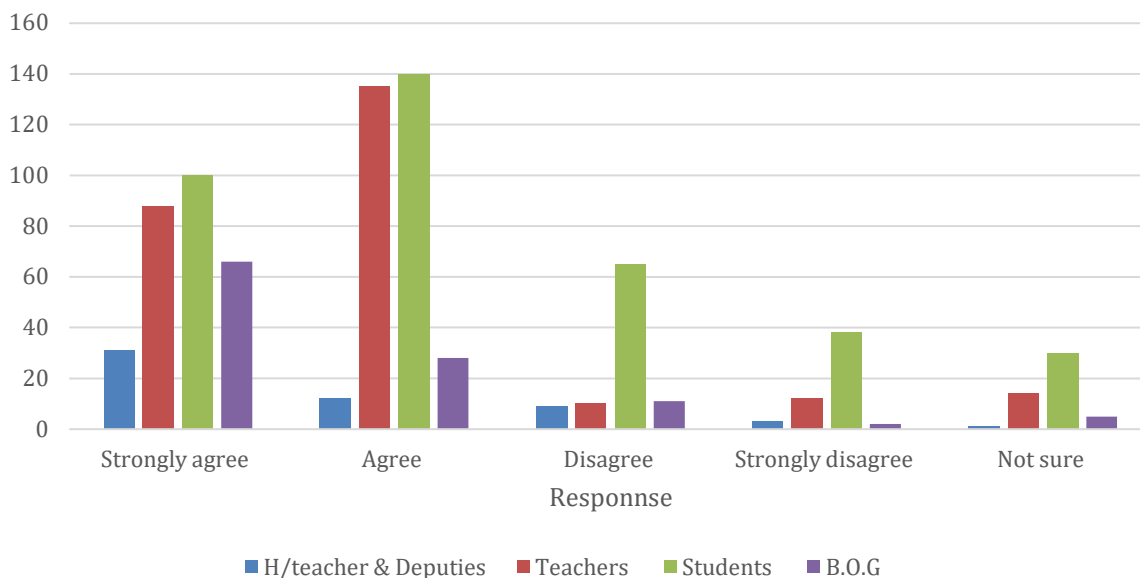
The study sought to establish whether charging fees influences students drop out in USE schools in western Uganda.

Table 4 showing whether charging fees contribute to school dropout.

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY OF RESPONDENTS				TOTAL	Percentage
	HTRS & Deputies	Teachers	Students	B.O.G	Frequency	
Strongly agree	31	88	100	66	285	35.6%
Agree	12	135	140	28	315	39.4%
Disagree	09	10	65	11	95	11.9%
Strongly disagree	03	12	38	02	55	6.9%
Not sure	01	14	30	05	50	6.2%
<b>Total</b>					<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

### Whether charging fees contribute to school dropout.



On whether charging fees at school influence school dropout, in table 4 above a cumulative 75% agreed that charging for fees at school influence school dropout, 18.8% disagreed and 6.2% were not sure. This is because most universal secondary schools do charge additional fees to USE students. These findings also agree with Makudi (2004) who explained that schooling costs such as fees and other indirect costs impact on household decisions to access, he further asserts that not only do school fees lead to under enrolment and drop out but also limit attendance and lead to temporally withdraw. These finds are also in time with the research by Obasi (2010), World Bank report (2012), which indicates students are locked out of schools if they cannot pay school fees.

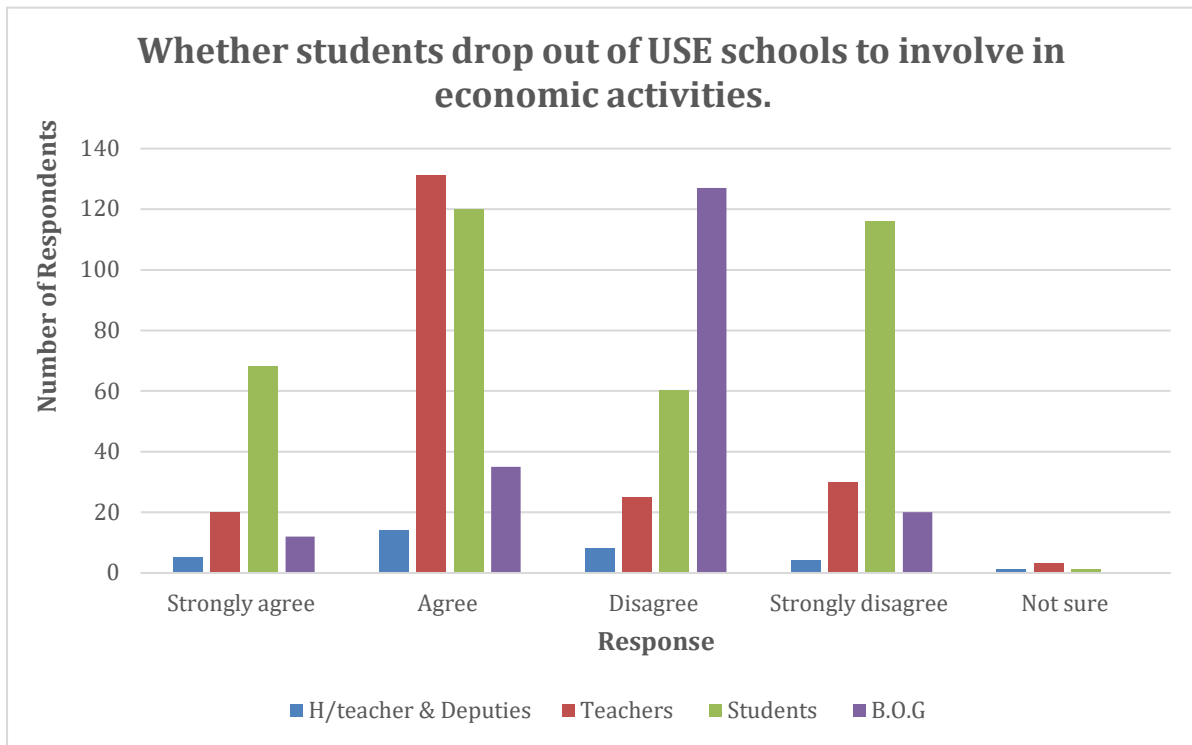
**Students drop out of school to involve in other economic activities like Agricultural activities.**

This study sought to find out whether students drop out of school to involve in other economic activities like agricultural activities, trading, riding bodaboda, etc. as presented in table 5.

Table 5 showing whether students drop out of USE schools to involve in economic activities.

REPOSES	FREQUENCY OF RESPONDENTS				TOTAL Frequency	Percentage
	HTRS & Deputies	Teachers	Students	B.O.G		
Strongly agree	05	20	68	12	105	13.1%
Agree	14	131	120	35	300	37.5%
Disagree	08	25	60	127	220	27.5%
Strongly disagree	04	30	116	20	170	21.3%
Not sure	01	03	01	00	05	0.6%
<b>Total</b>					<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data



On whether students drop out of school to involve in other economic activities in table 5 above, 50.6% of respondents agreed, while 48.8% disagreed, and 0.6% were not sure. From the findings above, it shows that students drop out of school to involve in other economic activities. This findings is agreement with Rose and Samarral (2007) indicated that agricultural work often makes students to drop out of school this because it seasonal and clashes with schooling time tables leading to seasonal with draws and even drop out of school.

**Whether students’ drop out of school because of child labor.**

This study sought to find out whether students drop out of school because of child labor.

**Table 6 showing whether students drop out of school because of child labor.**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY OF RESPONDENTS				Total Frequency	Percentage
	HTRS & Deputies	Teachers	Students	B.O.G		
Strongly agree	30	85	105	65	285	35.6%
Agree	15	150	143	20	328	41.0%
Disagree	07	15	65	10	97	12.1%
Strongly disagree	01	05	25	05	36	4.5%
Not sure	02	06	45	01	54	6.8%
<b>Total</b>					<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

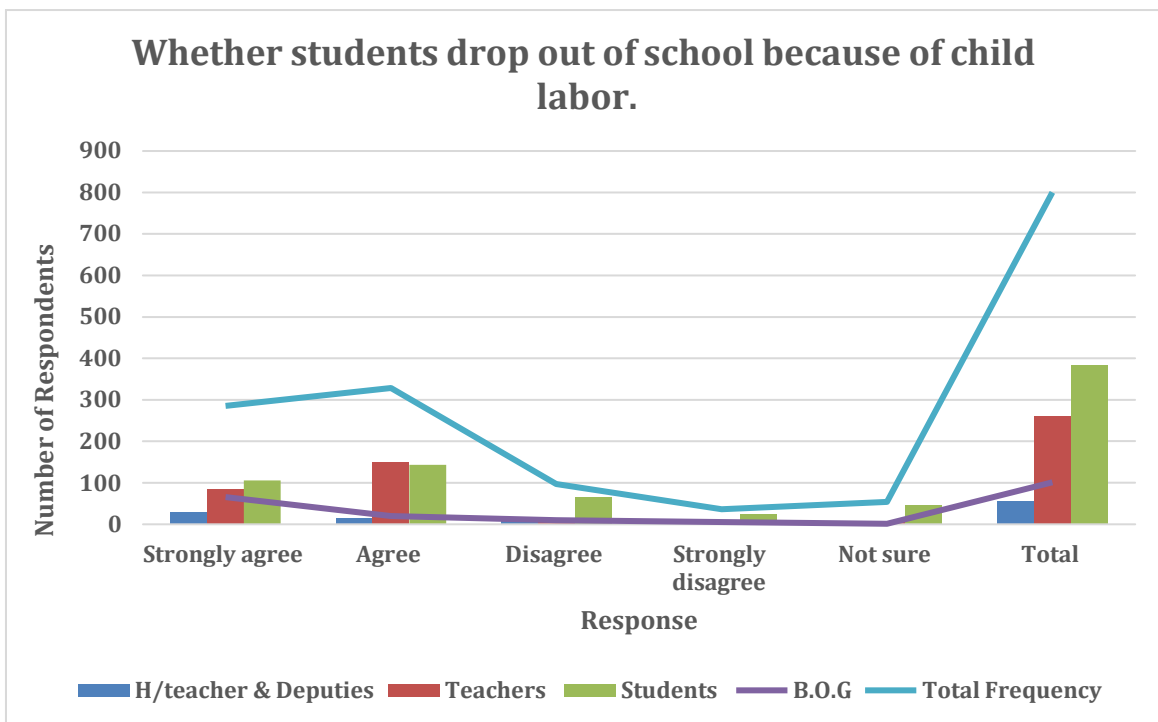
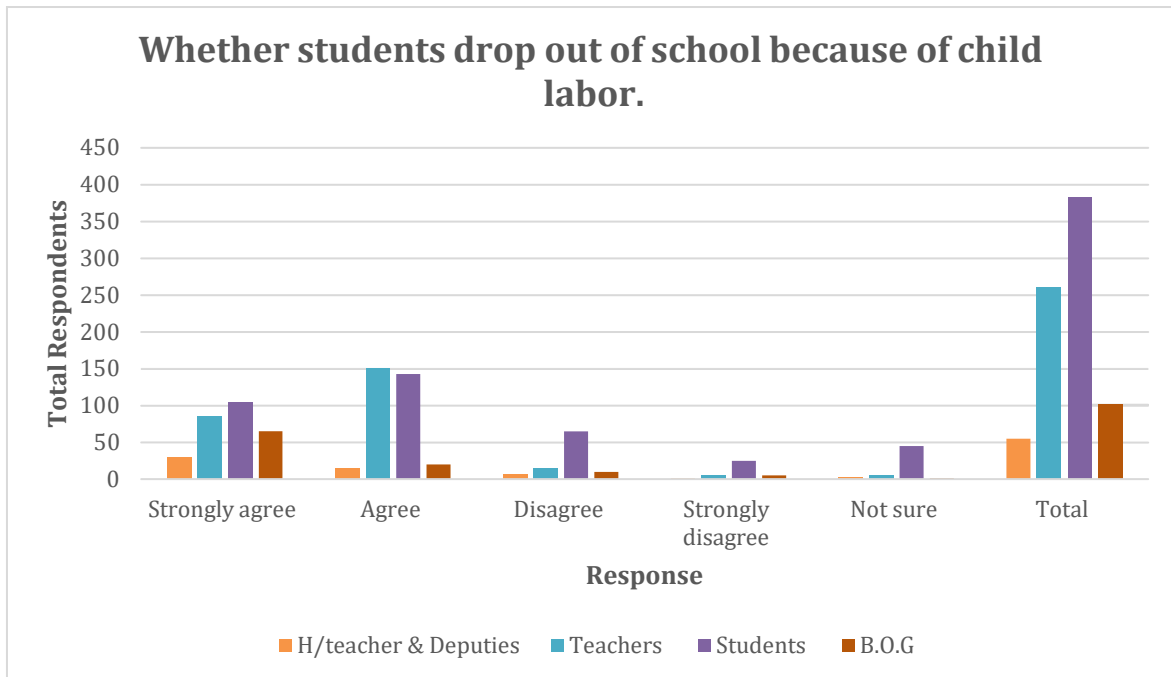


Table 6 shows that majority 76.6% of the respondents agreed that students drop out of school because of child labor, 16.6% disagreed and 6.8% were not sure. The majority 76.6% agrees with ILO/IPEC (2014) who revealed that most children especially girls drop out of school because of child labor.

## II. Conclusion

The study determined that the major economic factors why students dropped out of USE in western Uganda included; charging fees (development fees) (75% and child labor (76%). This points to a high level of poverty in the region.

## III. Recommendations

Government's plan should focus more resources at secondary school level to cater for scholastic materials, provide school infrastructural development to enhance the learning environment. Government policy on school funding should be reviewed to reconcile the current ban on PTA funds with school and teachers' requirement. The Ministry of Education and sports together should consider scrapping off cost sharing in secondary schools and at the same time urge government to provide eradication interventions in communities in support of education Development.

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