

**PARENTAL CHOICE OF INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN UGANDA
REASONS FOR CHOICE, EXIT AND CONTINUITY**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

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DECLARATION

I, **Dick Sserunkuuma**, hereby declare that this field research project entitled “**PARENTAL CHOICE OF INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN UGANDA: REASONS FOR CHOICE, EXIT AND CONTINUITY**” is my original work and it has never been submitted to any institution of higher learning for any award.

Signed



Date: February 25, 2025

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this field research project by **Dick Sserunkuuma**, entitled “**PARENTAL CHOICE OF INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN UGANDA: REASONS FOR CHOICE, EXIT AND CONTINUITY**” has been conducted under my supervision and is submitted with my approval.

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DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to God Almighty, for entrusting me with the profound ministry of Christian education, and for the vision to raise a generation of godly transformational servant leaders through Christian education. It is the burden of the compelling vision you gave me that drove me back to school at an advanced age. Your guidance, mercy and grace have been my steadfast anchor throughout this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the need to understand what international Christian schools can do to retain enrolled students until they graduate from high school (grade 12). Sixty parents completed the online questionnaire, and 18 of these participated in a virtual personal interview. Of the sixty, 45% have children who exited the initially chosen school before completion of high school, and are referred to as early-leavers. The majority (55%) who retained or committed to retain their children in the initially chosen Christian school until completion of grade 12 are referred to as continuers.

The study shows that when choosing Christian schools, parents prioritize spiritual factors, academic quality, school environment and extracurricular program. Financial factors were not a major consideration. However, although both continuers and early-leavers consider student-parent experiences in their decisions; the main difference is that continuers tend to prioritize factors related to spiritual growth and school environment in their decision to stay/continue at the school; while early-leavers tend to prioritize factors related to finances, academic quality and extracurricular activities in their decision to leave early/exit. Continuers also noticed gaps in academic and extracurricular programs as did the early-leavers, but appeared more willing than early-leavers to trade these off, especially for spiritual factors. Therefore, Christian schools need to not only continue to focus on the spiritual development of the children, but also on finding and maintaining a balance between spiritual growth, academic rigor, extracurricular activities, student-parent experience and affordability of the education they offer.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The decision to enroll children in private Christian schools is often rooted in a desire for an educational environment that aligns with the family's values and beliefs. For many parents, the choice of a school reflects not only academic aspirations but also a commitment to nurturing their children's spiritual development. However, the phenomenon of early student exits from these schools raises important questions about the factors influencing parental commitment and student retention. This study aims to explore the dynamics that lead some families to remain steadfast in their choice of private Christian schools until completion of high school, while others opt to withdraw before their children complete high school. By understanding these differing motivations, this research seeks to provide insights that can inform strategies for enhancing student enrollment and retention in international Christian schools in Uganda. The following sections of this chapter present the background of the study, the problem statement, the key research questions that guided the study, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Anecdotal information suggests growing loss of public confidence in the Uganda national education curriculum. Writing about the context of educational deficiencies in Uganda, Kyle Harrison identified five core issues that are deeply interconnected within the educational system in Uganda. These include lack of: resources, accountability, effective assessment, support structure and decentralized teacher operations (Harrison, 2017). Among these, lack of effective assessment is at the core of the discontent of parents with the national education curriculum, which is followed by the majority of both public and private schools in Uganda. Uganda's school system has over

the years been overly focused on students' test performances, i.e., teaching to the test¹, as opposed to students' knowledge retention. Given that teachers focus solely on test results, the quality of education suffers. Furthermore, the feedback that students get doesn't help them understand what needs to be improved, since it usually consists of only "good" or "bad" remarks. In addition, students that need special attention rarely receive help due to the disproportionate ratio of students per teacher. Even if teachers want to improve students' experience, they are overwhelmed by the amount of content that needs to be graded. Parents also feel schools do not create well-rounded individuals because they either exclude subjects such as art, sports, leadership skills and spiritual education or put little emphasis on the importance of these as they are not 'testable' subjects. Lack of focus and assessment in these areas prevents students from exploring different dimensions of the academic sphere in which they would excel.

As a result of these and many other issues, experts believe the education system in Uganda at all levels has not served its intended objectives. For generations the curriculum has been overloaded and it has failed to impart survival life skills that can make students effective and successful in life (Musoke, 2017). Designed by colonialists, the curriculum was knowledge-based with little emphasis on skills and values. Its content was overloaded with a multiplicity of overlapping subjects, and focused on book-learning as opposed to mastery of competencies. Textbooks were overloaded with content which favors learners with high reading abilities and the curriculum was not in line with international benchmarks in key learning areas. With the explosion of sciences and technology, the old curriculum needed to be overhauled

¹ In short, teaching to the test means that teachers focus on specific items in order to ensure that their students achieve higher scores during standardized tests.

(Agaba, 2023), because it has been overtaken by new realities that demand changes in the education system to address the current social-economic needs of the country.

Moreover, statistics from an Inter-University Council for East Africa survey conducted in 2014 show that University graduates lacked employability skills—technical mastery and basic work-related capabilities. At least 63 % of the graduates in Uganda were unfit for jobs and this was the highest percentage in Africa with Tanzania at 61%, Burundi 55%, Rwanda 52% and Kenya at 51% (Nangonzi, 2022). Several years later, things had not changed a lot in Uganda. A report by the Centre for Policy Analysis on the state of youth in Uganda in 2019 indicated that the majority of the youth demanded more practical subjects, and more than half of them said that the education they had received had not prepared them for the available opportunities in the labor market (Aber, 2022).

In response to public outcry, and in a bid to achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goal about “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” the Ministry of Education and Sports reviewed the curriculum. In February 2020, the Ministry rolled out the New Lower Secondary School Curriculum (NLSC) in a phased approach, starting with Senior One. The curriculum aims at improving the quality and relevance of secondary education and ensure that post primary students are armed with skills and competences required for employability in the 21st century job market (Agaba, 2023). The new curriculum was designed to help learners develop critical thinking ability, creativity and collaboration, and the spirit of teamwork and communication skills, among many skills required for personal and professional development of the learners (Aber, 2022). The curriculum focuses upon learners acquiring a balanced set of understanding, skills, and values to enable them to participate in a technology-driven global economy, solve problems in their communities, and operate effectively at national

and global level. With classroom time reduced to five contact hours, the rest of the time is for learners to engage in research, project work, clubs and games and sports.

However, even before it was rolled out, many stakeholders raised concerns as to whether the skill development effort in the new curriculum will succeed, given the inadequate materials in the Ugandan education sector. This is because most schools do not have enough computers for learners to acquire skills in information and communication technology (ICT) or other requisite infrastructures like laboratories and materials to carry out practical work. Most education experts agree that reforms in the education system are long overdue but they complain that the apparent haste and lack of consultation of key stakeholders in this important job — one of the most critical in transforming Uganda—might lead the education sector in a wrong direction. Many knowledgeable people within the public and education sector were not consulted about the curriculum reforms (Musoke, 2012). Experts warned that enhanced teacher welfare, effective evaluation, and inspection framework (among other structural concerns) needed to be addressed because they are the critical determinants of an effective curriculum that will deliver the country to her dream; otherwise, the appropriate needs of students and the job market may not be adequately realized (*Education reforms: Why curriculum implementation may fail?* 2020)

All these warnings and concerns seem to have been ignored because barely two years after the curriculum was rolled out, teachers appear to have reverted to the old curriculum as schools lack teaching materials. In addition, many teachers have not yet understood the new curriculum, and others have never got a chance to train because only a few training sessions were held, which did not benefit most teachers (The independent, 2023).

In the midst of eroding confidence of parents in the national education curriculum, several private education institutions emerged to provide alternative curriculums. Among the many

alternative curriculums in Uganda is the Accelerated Christian Education curriculum (ACE) followed by several private international Christian schools in Uganda. ACE is a Bible-based curriculum which conveys biblical values and concepts that shape interpersonal relationships and productive learning. Instruction is individualized to cater for the individual differences of children and is non-graded. The ACE consists of self-instructional, godly character-building, individually prescribed, mastery-based curriculum and material. The core curriculum provides students with academics (Mathematics, English, Literature and Creative Writing, Social Studies, Science, Word Building and Bible Reading), skill building and talent development, character and wisdom training, and knowledge of God and His Word.²

Despite government efforts to revise the national education curriculum, the challenges its implementation is facing suggest that private international schools with more balanced curriculums shall for long remain the best option for parents who can afford to take their children to such schools. Moreover, there is increasing realization by parents of the need to go beyond academics to train their children in godly character; and to focus on whole-person development (body, mind, heart and spirit) rather than on academic achievement alone³, and the ACE curriculum caters for

² Each core subject consists of 12 PACEs per level from pre-school to Grade 12. A PACE (*Packet of Accelerated Christian Education*) is a booklet of learning material, similar to a textbook chapter. Together with the parents and teachers, students project their majors and elective courses at the end of the 9th Grade, which must be completed in Grades 10-12 before receiving a College Entrance Certificate. The majors include Math, English, Life Orientation, Religious Studies, Life Sciences (biology), Physical Sciences (physics and chemistry), History, Geography, Accounting, Business Studies, Engineering Graphics and Design, Arts and Culture, and Tourism. The non-core curriculum includes electives in various areas like foreign languages, public speaking and other skills. The program has several physical and skills development activities complementing classroom-based learning. These include physical development programs; field sports such as football, basketball and volleyball; swimming; music, dance and drama; Art & Crafts and Home Economics; and Computer Applications.

³ The Paradigm of education by Steve Covey is about developing the whole person versus focusing solely on helping students to achieve academically.

that. It is these realities that give Christian schools following the ACE curriculum an advantage over those following the national curriculum.⁴

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the advantages that Christian schools following the ACE curriculum have over those following the national curriculum, many ACE schools are faced with a challenge of a significant proportion of enrolled students exiting the schools before they graduate from high school. Those who exit before graduation either join other international Christian schools following the ACE curriculum, go into homeschooling using the ACE curriculum or join secular international schools; and some go back to secular national schools—a realm that they had left before making the decision to enroll in a Christian school. Such occurrences affect school stability and erode the confidence of Christian school owners to plan for the future and invest in growth. The private nature of Christian schools in Uganda makes their sustainability directly tied to enrollment and retention, so it is critically important that they not only continue to enroll but also retain the enrolled students to provide stability for the budget, which in turn supports the academic, social, and athletic programs of the school and leads to further improvement in enrollment and retention (Ahlstrom, 2013). This study seeks to provide insights that can inform strategies for enhancing student enrollment and retention in ACE schools in Uganda.

1.3 Key Research Questions

1.3.1 Action Question: What can international Christian schools do to retain enrolled students until they graduate from high school?

⁴ In fact, the new national curriculum borrows many of its concepts, such as the learner-centered methods of delivery from the ACE curriculum, which in itself is an endorsement of the ACE as a good curriculum.

1.3.2 Central Research Question: Why do some students enrolled in international Christian schools exit before they graduate from high school?

1.3.3 Subsidiary Insight Questions

1. For what reasons do parents enroll their children in international Christian schools?
2. For parents who enroll their children in international Christian schools but exit before they graduate from high school, why do they exit before their children complete high school?
3. For the parents who chose exit options that are not another international Christian school, what would need to change for them to consider re-enrolling their children in an international Christian school?
4. For parents that kept their children in the same international Christian school until they graduated from high school, for what reasons did they keep their children in this school?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study aims to address the fundamental question of why students enrolled in international Christian schools exit before completing high school by exploring the perspectives of parents. By delving into the reasons behind parents' decisions to enroll, exit, or remain in these schools (in quest of answers to the above-listed insight questions), the study seeks to uncover valuable insights that can inform strategies for increasing enrollment and retention rates in Christian schools. In a landscape where private Christian schools in Uganda face the challenges of a competitive educational environment, the study recognizes that the sustainability of these institutions hinges on maintaining stable student numbers and, thus, income to support their academic and extracurricular programs. Understanding and responding to parents' expectations regarding Christian education are crucial factors in attracting and keeping students enrolled; and providing

this understanding is at the core of this study. The study endeavors to raise awareness among school stakeholders and foster constructive discussions on enhancing schools' capacity to meet parental expectations as they pursue their collective and individual mandates.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” (Aristotle)

“Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there.” (John Wooden)

This literature review is guided by the central research question for this study (Why do some students enrolled in international Christian schools exit before they graduate from high school?); and one of the subsidiary insight questions (For what reasons do parents enroll their children in international Christian schools?). Addressing these questions is fundamental to understanding the dynamics of student enrollment and retention, which are critical to the sustainability of Christian schools. Before delving into the literature on student retention, this section begins with a review of literature on what informs parents’ choice of schools to provide insights on enrollment motivations.

2.1 Factors that influence school choice

Various studies on school choice have assumed that parents derive utility from the human capital of their children along with the consumption of other goods and services. (e.g., Alderman et al., 2001); Gertler et al., 1987; Glick & Sahn, 2006). By sending their children to school, parents gain utility from the additional gain in the human capital of their children but suffer from reduced consumption by the total sum of the school fees. The additional gain in human capital depends on the quality of education provided at the chosen school. These assumptions are based on the Rational Choice Theory (RCT), which suggests that parents are utility maximizers who make decisions from clear value preferences, based on calculations of the costs, benefits, and probabilities of success of various options (Hatcher, 1998). This implies that individuals first

weigh the expected positive benefits against the expected negative consequences, and then they base their choice on what they think will ultimately benefit them the most.

More recent research, however, indicates that the context of parental decision-making regarding school choice is far more complex than the result of individual rational calculations of the economic return of their investment in particular education options. Rather, parents appear to employ a ‘mixture of rationalities’ involving an element of ‘the fortuitous and haphazard’ (Ball, 2003, p. 23). To make decisions regarding their children’s education, parents will rely on their personal values and subjective desired goals of education, as well as other people within their social and professional networks to collect information. Parents, whose network does not provide access to relevant and valuable information regarding options of school choice, are limited in their capacity to make informed choices (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999).

Moreover, for Christian parents, the motivation to search for and choose a school for their child(ren) should not be driven by RCT, but by the need to find a school that will work as a partner in helping them to obey God by fulfilling the God-given mandate to educate their child(ren) in God’s ways; a school that not only emphasizes academic excellence but also spiritual growth and character development—a Christian school for that matter. In answering the question “Why a Christian school?” the Accelerated Education Enterprises (AEE) CEO Graham Yoko avows that *“Christian education is not an alternative nor a luxury; not even just a good idea. It is the law of God—the law God gave to our forefathers; the same law that He now gives to us. It is the great commandment”* (Yoko, undated). The Bible in Matthew 22:34-37 tells a story of a lawyer who asked Jesus a question to test him.

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”.

In His answer to the lawyer, Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-7, a scripture in which God instructs every parent to teach his/her children the Word of God as part of everyday life; and to start as soon as they are weaned from the breast.⁵

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.**”⁶

For any parent, this is such an enormous task, especially during these days of immense economic pressure that necessitates both parents to work away from home to provide for the family. However, this is not a suggestion; it’s a commandment from God, and it is to be obeyed. So, for a Christian parent, choosing a Christian school that offers a Bible-based curriculum is not just a good idea or preference; it is obedience to God’s great commandment, which is why school choice for a Christian parent should not be driven by the RCT or by preference, but by the conviction founded on the belief in God’s Word which they must consistently follow.⁷

In a study on the choice of secondary schools among parents from England, Wales and Scotland, Hunter (1991) found four key determinants of parental choice, which include good

⁵ Isaiah 28:9; but also Proverbs 22:6

⁶ Psalms 78:5-7 instructs in the same way

⁷ Beyond the need to obey God, education that stops at academic excellence and ignores building godly character (the heart) in children falls short because children need character to sustain them in the jobs where excellence in academics place them, and this is well articulated by Aristotle “*Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.*” More so, “*Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there.*” (John Wooden). But also, according to Prophet Jeremiah “*the human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? (Jeremiah 17:9)*”; and according to Oswald J Smith “*The heart of the human problem, is the problem of the human heart.*”. So, if the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart, then the heart of education aimed at contending with human problems must be the education of the heart (*i.e., the heart of education ought to be the education of the heart*).

discipline, exam results, single-sex school, and proximity to home. 86% of parents who chose a school primarily because it was single-sex were parents of girls. However, when Börcsök et al. (2018) examined factors influencing parental preference for schools in Cambridgeshire County, England, they found that parents face many trade-offs in choosing schools for their children, with some prioritizing factors other than school quality. One-sixth of parents chose as first-preference a school that had been judged as less than good by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), yet over a quarter of these parents lived nearer to a school rated good or outstanding than to the less-than-good school they chose. This is likely because some parents may prioritize school characteristics that are not reflected in Ofsted ratings; while others may make strategic decisions based on the likelihood of admission. Also, income appeared important, with lower-income households prioritizing location, high-quality teachers, and community links; while higher-income households prioritized discipline, exam results, and the effectiveness of the school's senior leadership team.

In Canada, Bosetti (2004) studied the determinants of choice of elementary schools in Alberta and found that parents consider many different reasons, including smaller class size, shared values and beliefs, teaching style, strong academic reputation, religious content in the curriculum, students getting more individual help, proximity to home, having special programmes, and the teachers and principal. However, these reasons were assigned different ranks by parents in different types of schools, i.e., non-religious private, religious private, public and alternative schools, implying that different groups of parents are motivated by different factors.

The USA has more diverse literature on parental choice of schools. Bukhari & Randall (2009) explored the factors that influenced parental decisions to exit a public school and enroll their children in a private school in Utah and found that the key reasons for doing so included the

quality of the curriculum, religious values, moral values, quality of instruction, class size, school climate, and disciplined environment. In a related study conducted in Metropolitan Nashville public schools, parent involvement appeared to be a more important indicator of whether or not a parent would consider sending their child to a private school because parent involvement and communication are perceived to be more easily facilitated and valued in private schools (Goldring & Phillips, 2008). Holmes Erickson (2017) reviewed the literature on how parents select schools in the USA and found that while parents value academic quality, it is not the universal primary choice factor. Rather, they make trade-offs among their preferences, with the primary decision-making criteria for choosing a school being academic opportunities and quality, followed by family/community values and safety. However, parents who have access to higher-quality neighborhood schools often prioritize non-academic factors such as safety, family/community values and a school's intergenerational history. Valentine (2016) examined the choice behaviors of parents from a diverse Mid-Atlantic urban-suburban county in the USA and found that parents often consider multiple factors, including academic quality, safety, diversity, and extracurricular opportunities. They want rigorous programs that prepare their children for college; that meet their children's academic, social, and emotional needs. When it's all said and done, school choice comes down to one individual variable, the parent's ability to choose a school where they feel their child will thrive. To most parents, thrive does not have a single definition. Thrive involves the social, academic, and physical potential of the child. In a related study among families in the affluent suburbs of a large Midwestern city in the USA, Hall (2009) found that the primary reason why parents choose nondenominational Christian education is that they want their children to have a strong moral and ethical foundation, a safe and nurturing environment, and a high-quality education that integrates faith and academics. The most common reason for leaving

nondenominational Christian schools is dissatisfaction with the school's academic program or leadership, followed by financial strain and changes in family circumstances. The study also found that parents tend to prioritize academic quality, school culture, and faith integration when evaluating nondenominational Christian schools; and they value schools that are transparent and responsive to their concerns, while at the same time tending to be highly involved in their children's education, prioritizing their spiritual growth and character development.

On the African continent, Venter, E. (2012) investigated the reasons why parents in Gauteng, South Africa select a particular school for their children and found the quality of teaching and learning as the primary factor. The other key factors included academic performance and school infrastructure, an environment with strong discipline and safety, strong religious inclination with particular emphasis on Christian values, and the development of future-ready skills, such as problem-solving, communication, and creativity.

Coming closer to East Africa, Msendekwa & Lubuva (2021) examined the reasons for parents' choice of pre-primary schools in Dodoma, Tanzania and found that although the RCT is theoretically appealing, it is very difficult to practice due to the challenges that parents face when choosing schools including home to school distance, costs, availability of meals at school and language of instruction. In Kenya, Nishimura & Yamano (2013) analyzed the determinants of school choice in rural Kenya and found that parents react to the quality of public education, as measured by the average pupil-teacher ratios of public schools in the community. As this ratio increases, the probabilities of both attending private schools and transferring to different schools increase among children. They also found that children have a higher probability of attending private schools and transferring to different schools if they belong to wealthier households than poor households; and those girls have a lower probability of attending private schools than boys

do. In another study conducted in urban Kenya, Zuilkowski et al. (2017) explored the reasons for parents to send their children to low-cost private schools in a country with free primary education. Among private school parents, quality was the most common consideration for more than half of the parents; but for public schools, 37% of parents said affordability of fees was the main factor, while 29% mentioned convenient location.

However, the literature on parents' behavior regarding school choices in Uganda is very sparse. One study by Namukwaya & Kibirige (2014) in Kotido district found the majority of choice factors to be related to culture: pastoral lifestyle, strong cultural values, negative attitude towards education and engagement in domestic work. Other factors included social economic characteristics and environmental factors. In another study by Kakuhikire (2018), more than half of the parents in Kiboga district were found to take their children to private secondary schools in a country with free secondary school education; and the parental school choice predictors included formal education of the parents, household income, physical appearance of the school (beauty) and availability of public transport.

2.2 Factors that influence student retention

O'Gorman et al. (2015) studied the contextual factors that contribute to student retention in alternative education settings in Ireland. They found that schools which provided a sanctuary for students (physical, emotional and psychological safe spaces; fostered a sense of community; enabled students to affirm their racial/ethnic pride and employed flexible behavioral support) increased student engagement and retention. The contextual factors that they found to contribute to student retention in alternative education settings included (1) School culture and ethos that values inclusivity, respect, and understanding of students' diverse backgrounds and experiences—

creating a sense of community; (2) Teacher-student relationships that are supportive and positive; (3) Curriculum that is relevant and engaging for students, and that recognizes their individual strengths and needs; (4) Parental and community involvement that supports students' academic and personal development; and (5) Adequate resources and funding to support student learning and well-being. They also found individual factors such as motivation, self-esteem, and resilience to be important for retention.

Similar to the O'Gorman et al. (2015) study, another study by Lawton (1989) on what high schools in Ontario Canada need to do in order to increase student retention also found that they need to focus on providing a supportive and inclusive learning environment that encourages collaboration and fosters a sense of belonging. Effective communication between students, teachers, and parents was identified as crucial in promoting student engagement and motivation; and strong leadership was deemed important in driving school improvement and creating a positive school culture. The study highlighted the need for continuous improvement efforts, such as ongoing professional development for teachers and an ongoing review and evaluation process, to ensure that schools are meeting the needs of all students and providing them with the best possible educational experience.

Similar to the school choice literature, the USA has more diverse literature on student retention. Molnar (1993) studied the impact of mission effectiveness on student retention at Barry University (Florida) and found that institutional effectiveness, by itself, cannot curtail attrition; but missions that differentiate the university from other schools have greater potential for creating commitment and encouraging retention. Polinsky (2003) on the other hand observed that students in various schools across the USA who are engaged in their school community and have positive relationships with their teachers are more likely to stay in school and graduate, and that high-

quality instruction and challenging course work also play a significant role in reducing dropout rates.

In a case study on factors affecting student retention probabilities in USA colleges, Wetzel et al. (1999) and found financial considerations to be of less importance in the persistence decision than academic and social integration factors. Academic integration is defined by students' academic performance, level of intellectual development, and perception of having a positive experience in academic settings, while social integration is defined by involvement in extracurricular activities and the presence of positive relationships with peers. Those who feel at home, who take part in extracurricular activities, and who feel connected with fellow students and teachers are more inclined to persist. Without social integration, it is more difficult to persist, and ultimately to graduate.

In another case study in the southwestern part of the USA on the issues associated with student retention at a faith-based independent day school, Ahlstrom (2013) studied factors that stakeholders considered to be important for retention, as well as the perceived issues that relate to retention. The mission of the school—the focus on a balance of high-quality general studies, faith-based curriculum, values and culture—was an essential factor in student retention. Stakeholders were also concerned about affordability and perceived a need for financial aid as an issue affecting retention; and the need for the school administration to focus on improving positive communication. Regarding the perceived issues that relate to retention, the predominant ones included relationship building by the administration, fine-tuning communication from the administration to the school community, finding the right balance between faith-based and academic curriculum, exclusivity versus inclusivity of non-Jewish students, tuition support, and improving the school's marketing strategy.

Specific to Christian academic institutions, Davis (2018) studied the relationship between school culture and student retention in private Christian schools in the USA and found a strong relationship between school culture⁸ and student retention. Schools with a positive and supportive culture that promotes student engagement, academic excellence, and spiritual growth have higher student retention rates than schools with a negative or unsupportive culture. The research also found that school leadership, teacher-student relationships, and extracurricular activities play a significant role in shaping the school culture and influencing student retention.

In a related study at Christian University in the USA, Coghlan et al. (2005) investigated the relationship between the match between students' expectations and experiences and their likelihood to persist or withdraw from Texas Christian University (TCU). They found that students who experienced a match between their expectations and experiences were more likely to persist at the university than those who experienced a mismatch. There were no differences among the groups (returners and non-returners) in regard to how well academic experiences matched academic expectations; and the scores on the academic expectations match scale were relatively low across all groups. However, the differences among the groups in regard to how well social experiences matched social expectations were statistically significant. The returners were more likely to report that their social experiences matched their social expectations than were the non-returners. The study also found that a mismatch between expectations and experiences had a negative effect on students' satisfaction, engagement, and intentions to persist.

In the case of Africa, literature on student retention is very scanty, and mainly from the southern part of Africa. The literature search did not find any relevant studies on student retention in schools in Uganda. Eresia-Eke et al. (2020) studied the relationship between service quality,

⁸ School culture is a complex set of beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, values, and norms that impact the behavior of administration, teachers, students, and parents.

student satisfaction and student retention in small private colleges in South Africa and found statistically-significant positive associations between dimensions of service quality and student satisfaction as well as between student satisfaction and student retention. Another study by Machingambi (2012) in rural Zimbabwe found teacher-student relationships, the nature of the high school curriculum as well as school policies and practices to be key drivers of dropping out of different schools.

This review of the literature on parental school choice and student retention has revealed that decision-making on these two very important issues is influenced by a variety of factors, including school quality; academic performance; school culture, mission, curriculum and extracurricular activities; academic and social integration; location, cost, and social networks, socioeconomic and cultural background, religious values and moral values, class size, match between expectations and experiences, and service quality among others. However, most of the reviewed literature is from other cultures and it is not clear if they were applicable to the context of Uganda. What is clear though is that parents' demand for certain types of schooling characteristics influences what schools supply, and schools compete to attract and retain parent consumers because they need the parents to choose them and stay with them to remain open and viable (Cooper, 2005). This is why a study of this nature is important to provide understanding of why some students enrolled in international Christian schools exit before they graduate from high school; and what schools need to do to retain enrolled students until they graduate, which is good for enhancing school stability and building the confidence of school owners to plan for the future and invest for growth. Maintaining enrollment provides stability for the budget, which in turn supports the academic, social, and athletic programs of the school and leads to further improvement in enrollment and retention.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Information Gathering Narrative

The original research plan for this study involved contacting school Principals or owners of Christian schools using the ACE curriculum in Uganda to obtain contact information for parents whose children are currently or were at one time enrolled in their schools, to seek their participation in the study as respondents. Two sets of parents were targeted as the main respondents to the questions in this study.

- (i) Parents who enrolled their children in Christian schools and kept them there until they completed high school (grade 12), as well as those who were yet to complete grade 12 but were committed to retaining their children in the same school until completion of grade 12.
- (ii) Parents who enrolled their children in Christian schools but exited before they completed high school (grade 12).

The study purposed to gather information from these two sets of parents for conducting a comparative analysis between those who exited before graduation and those who continued (or committed to continuing) until completion of high school, to provide an understanding of the factors that influence the choice to exit a school or continue until the end of high school.

Principals or owners of twelve (12) Christian schools were contacted via email and WhatsApp to explain the purpose of the study and seek their participation by providing contact information for their current and former parents who fit in the above two categories. Two Principals responded and expressed discomfort about sharing contact information for their parents without authorization, which is understandable. To address the issue of unauthorized sharing of parents' contact information, a link to the online survey questionnaire was inserted in an

introductory message to the study and sent to the Principals or owners of the twelve schools, who were requested to share the message and questionnaire link with their parents. The online survey questionnaire and link were created by a Research Assistant to the Principal Investigator (PI), Mr. Godfrey Alinaitwe. The Principals or school owners were encouraged to check the questionnaire for themselves to make sure they were comfortable with it before sending it out; and if not to raise any further concerns so they could be addressed before sharing the link with their parents. Several follow-up emails, WhatsApp messages and phone calls were made to check if the questionnaire link had been sent out, and only a handful of those contacted confirmed that they had shared the link. Still, there was a deafening silence from the majority.

One week after sharing the questionnaire link with the Principals or school owners, not a single parent had submitted a completed questionnaire! The questionnaire link was then sent to a group of parents for the school operated by the PI to this study, and several of these returned the questionnaire within a few days, including those that had exited the school. It became clear at this stage that the anticipated help from the contacted Principals and school owners would be hard to come by; which necessitated finding a quick alternative. As an alternative, individual parents known to the PI but with children in other Christian schools were contacted directly and requested to not only participate in the study but also share the link with others they know who fit in the two categories of parents targeted by this study.

3.2 Sampling strategy and sample size

According to the initial research plan, this study intended to follow a stratified random sampling procedure, with the different Christian schools contributing parents to this study forming the strata from which individual parents were to be randomly selected for participation in the study.

However, because of the difficulty faced in accessing the contact information for parents with children in different schools, the study opted for snowball sampling. Snowball sampling or chain-referral sampling is a non-probability sampling technique used in studies where participants are selected based on referrals from existing participants; and it is often used when the target population is difficult to reach or locate as was the case in this study. Initially, the study targeted 100 respondents to the survey questionnaire and 25 personal interviews. However, only 60 respondents completed and submitted the online questionnaire and out of these, 18 participated in virtual personal interviews conducted via Zoom. Therefore, it is upon these 60 completed questionnaires and 18 personal interviews that the study findings presented and discussed in chapter four are based.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Two informed consent forms (one for the survey and one for the personal interview) were prepared and sent out as part of the online questionnaire, and respondents were asked to complete one for the survey before embarking on the questionnaire and the other about the personal interview after completing the questionnaire. The consent forms asked the respondents to indicate whether or not they are willing to participate in the study by completing the attached questionnaire; and in a follow-up physical or virtual interview. Three parents who received the link declined to complete the questionnaire; and of the 60 who did, 35 expressed willingness to participate in the personal interview, although only 18 participated in the personal interview. All the personal interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded with the respondents' consent; after assuring them that the recordings of the interviews would be deleted after transcription of the gathered information.

The consent forms provided a more detailed explanation of the purpose of the study and informed the respondents that participation in the study was voluntary so they were free to accept or decline and even withdraw anytime, but also highlighted the importance of their participation in the study to contribute to helping to improve Christian education and schools in Uganda. The consent forms assured the respondents that they didn't face any risk in participating in this study because their responses would be held with utmost confidentiality.

3.4 Potential Bias

Being a Christian educator and school owner, I have a special interest in this study because of its potential to provide strategies for addressing the challenges of enrollment and retention of students until they graduate from high school. I would certainly prefer that the findings of this study turn out to be a complete list of clear and easy-to-implement ideas to overcome the twin challenges of enrollment and retention at my school. Therefore, there could be biases that I may bring to this research, some of which I may not even be aware of. For example, the temptation to over-sample parents from my school so that I can know all the reasons why each parent withdrew their child(ren) before graduation would bias the study in favor of my school and likely miss out on important opinions of parents from other schools. Due to the challenges faced in getting parents from other schools to participate in this study, about 15 per cent of the 60 parents who participated in this study are from my school. However, I did my best to get information from parents with children in other schools; and to keep my eyes on the major goal, which is to understand what international Christian schools in Uganda, not just my school, can do to retain enrolled students until they graduate from high school.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Processing and Analysis

The survey data for this study was gathered using an online tool developed using KoBo Toolbox software. KoBo Toolbox is an open-source suite of tools for data collection, management, and analysis; which provides a platform for designing surveys and collecting data using various devices like smartphones, tablets, or computers. Development of the online tool used to gather the data was developed by a Research Assistant (Godfrey Alinaitwe) using a structured questionnaire developed by the PI. After developing the tool, the Research Assistant generated a link which he shared with the PI, who in turn shared it with the respondents to complete the questionnaire online and submit the data using the KoBo Toolbox platform. The submitted data were gathered in a simple Excel sheet format for visualization and data exporting to STATA software for cleaning and analysis. The statistical analysis was also done by the Research Assistant with guidance from the PI, and was entirely descriptive, involving the generation of frequencies of individual variables and cross-tabulation of pairs for selected variables. The purpose of cross-tabulating some of the variables was to examine the relationship between variables and compare the distribution of data between early-leavers and continuers. This was intended to get an insight into associations (if any) between selected variables and being an early-leaver or a continuer. The generated frequencies were either directly summarized using simple tables or manipulated using weights assigned to the responses of the survey participants to generate rank scores for each variable, before presenting them in tables. For example, to identify factors that had the greatest influence on parents' decision to exit schools before their children completed grade 12, parents were asked to follow a pre-defined list of factors and indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree⁹ that a particular factor influenced their decision.

⁹ The parents' opinions (degree of agreement or disagreement) about the pre-defined list of factors was measured on a 5-point Likert scale with five answer options; namely, strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and not sure.

The parents' choices for each factor were assigned weights (strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, strongly disagree=1, not sure=0). These weights were then multiplied by the percentage of parents who made a particular choice for each factor, summed across the choices made for each factor and divided by the number of respondents to obtain the raking score for that factor. For example, if 60 parents gave their opinion about a given factor and the percentages of parents who chose the different answer options were as follows: 50% strongly agree, 30% agree, 10% disagree, 10% strongly disagree, and 0% not sure; the rank score for that factor would be $(4*50+3*30+2*10+1*10+0*0)/60 = 5.33$.

4.2 Profiling the Survey Respondents

Before reporting on the results of the analysis on the factors influencing parents' decisions on school choice and exit, the profile (general characteristics of the survey participants) is briefly examined and presented in Table 1. A total of sixty (60) parents participated in this study and of these, 71.7% are female. The majority of the parents (76.7%) are in the age bracket of 36-50 years of age, 6.7% are below 36 years of age and the rest (16.7%) are above 50 years of age. Data on the marital status of parents shows that 90% are married, and the rest are either single (1.7%), separated (3.3%) or divorced (3.3%). All the respondents are well educated, with the majority (61.7%) having post-graduate degrees (masters or PhD) and the rest graduated from University or Tertiary education institutions (38.3%). Regarding religion, the majority (53.3%) are affiliated with Pentecostal churches, while the rest are Protestant Anglicans (33.3%), Catholics (6.7%), and only one (1.7%) is a Seventh Day Adventist. Other religions account for only 5% of the study sample (N=60).

Table 1. General Profile/Characteristics of the Survey Participants

Characteristics	Percentage (N=60)
Gender	
Male	28.3
Female	71.7

TOTAL	100%
Age Bracket (years)	
19-35	6.7
36-50	76.7
51-60	13.3
Above 60	3.3
TOTAL	100%
Marital Status	
Single	1.7
Married	90
Divorced	3.3
Separated	3.3
Widowed	1.7
TOTAL	100%
Highest level of education completed	
Tertiary (e.g., University or Technical Institutes)	38.3
Post-graduate (Masters or Ph.D.)	61.7
TOTAL	100%
Religious affiliation	
Pentecostal	53.3
Protestant/Anglican	33.3
Catholic	6.7
S.D.A.	1.7
Others	5
TOTAL	100%

Source: SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4, SQ5, SQ6 and SQ7; N=60 (SQ=survey question in the questionnaire)

The survey also gathered information about the level of religious activity in both the personal life of the parents and their public engagement with the church; which could have a bearing on their commitment to the Christian faith and values and, thus, indirectly influence their decisions regarding choice and exit of Christian schools (Table 2).

Table 2. Level of Religious Activity by the Survey Participants

Religious Activity	Percentage (N=60)
Involvement in Church activity during the past 2 weeks	
No times	10
Once	21.7
Two times	18.3
Three Times	6.7
Four Times or more	43.3
TOTAL	100%
Engagement in personal Bible Study in the past week	
Nearly everyday	58.3
Several times	31.7
Once	8.3
Not at all	1.7
TOTAL	100%
Engagement in personal Prayer in the past week	
Nearly everyday	78.3

Several times	18.3
Once	1.7
Not at all	1.7
TOTAL	100%
Meeting with a small group for prayer or Bible study in the past week	
Nearly everyday	20
Several times	28.3
Once	18.3
Not at all	33.3
TOTAL	100%
Listening to a Christian radio or TV program in the past week	
Nearly everyday	45
Several times	26.7
Once	8.3
Not at all	10
TOTAL	100%
Leading a group activity or event connected with the Church in the past week	
Nearly everyday	8.3
Several times	15
Once	35
Not at all	41.7
TOTAL	100%

Source: SQ20, SQ21; N=60

In the past two weeks prior to the survey, 43.3% of the parents were involved in a church activity four or more times, 6.7% were involved three times, 18.3% two times, 21.7% once, and the rest (10%) did not get involved in any church activities. More than half (58.3%) of the parents engaged in personal Bible study nearly every day during the past week, about a third (31.7%) read their Bibles several times, while the rest did so either once (8.3%) or not at all (1.7%). The majority engaged in personal prayer nearly every day (78.3%) or several times (18.3%) during the past week, and only one parent (1.7%) prayed once and another one (1.7%) did not pray at all during the past week. Two-thirds (66.7%) met with a small group for Bible study or prayers during the past week, while the rest (33%) did not participate in group Bible study or prayer. The majority (81.7%) listened to a Christian radio or TV program nearly every day or several times during the past week; the rest either did so once (8.3%) or not at all (10%). About a quarter (23.3%) led a group activity or event connected with their church nearly every day or several times during the past week, while the majority did so only once (35%) or not at all (41.7%).

Ninety per cent (90%) of the parents are in a nuclear family set-up, and the rest are in single-parent families (8.3%) or guardianship (1.7%) (Table 3).

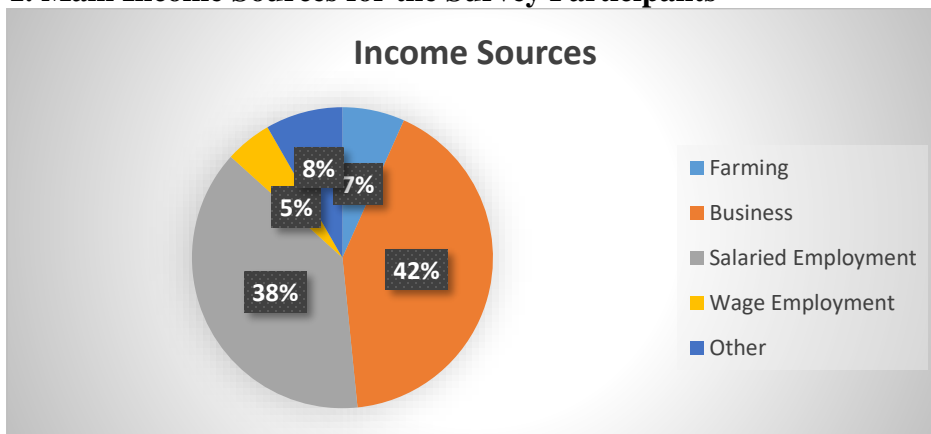
Table 3. Family Types among the Survey Participants

Type of the family	Percentage (N=60)
Nuclear	90
Single parent	8.3
Guardianship	1.7
TOTAL	100%

Source: SQ22, N=60

The main sources of family livelihood/income for the respondents include business (42%), salaried employment (38%), farming (7%), wage employment (5%), and others (8%) (Figure 1)

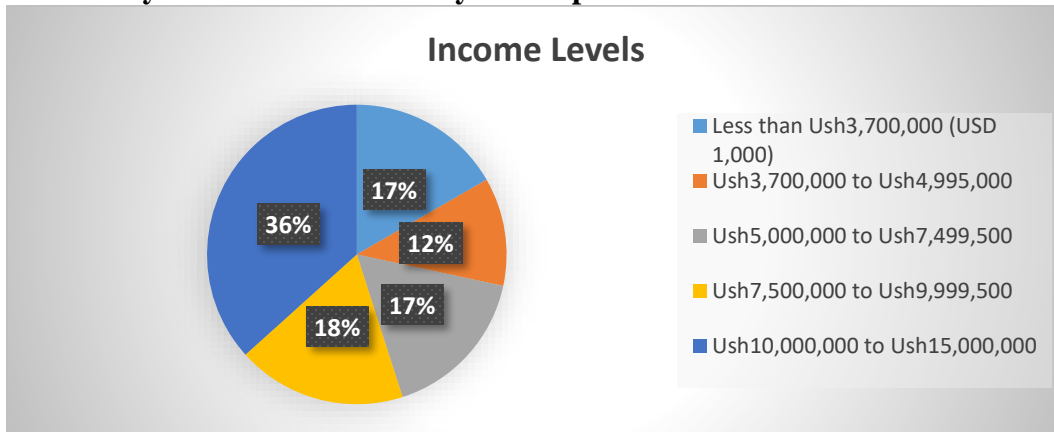
Figure 1. Main Income Sources for the Survey Participants



Source: SQ23, N=60.

More than a third of the parents (36.7%) earn between Ush10 million and 15 million a month from the main income source, 35% earn between Ush5 million and 10 million a month; the rest (28.3%) earn below Ush5 million per month (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Monthly Income for the Survey Participants

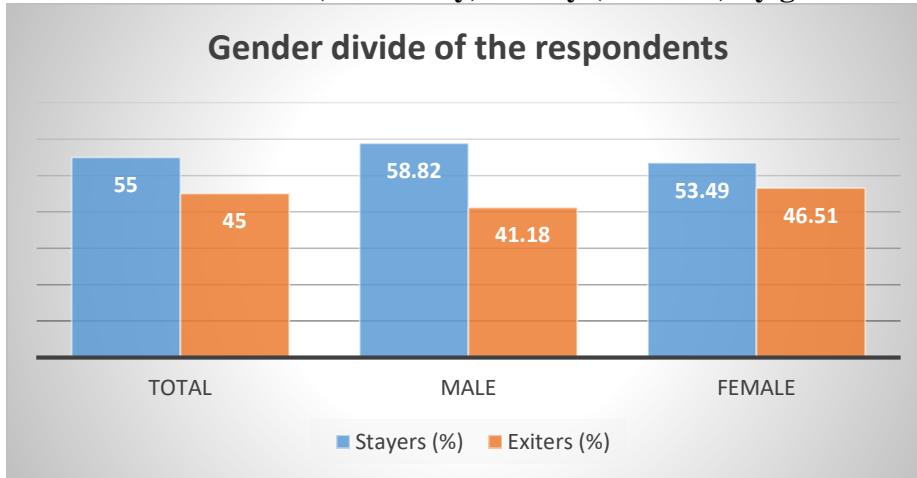


Source: SQ24, N=60.

4.3 Partitioning the Survey Respondents

After profiling the survey participants, they were grouped into two categories based on whether or not their children had exited the initially chosen international Christian school before completion of high school (grade 12). Out of the 60 parents who participated in the survey, 27 (45%) had children who exited (left early) before grade 12 and the rest (33 or 55%) remained or were committed to keeping their children in the same school until they graduate from high school. For purposes of this study, the term “early-leavers” is used to refer to those who exited before completion of high school, while those who stayed or committed to staying/continuing at the initially chosen international Christian school until grade 12 are referred to as “continuers”. Partitioning the respondents into these two sub-groups (early-leavers and continuers) makes it easier to compare the profiles of early-leavers and continuers to determine for example, whether or not male and female parents, or parents in different age brackets, or with different religious affiliations and level of religious activity, education and income levels differ in the tendency to exit or continue at the initially chosen international Christian school until grade 12.

Figure 3. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by gender



Source: SQ2, N=60

Just over half of both male (58.82%) and female (53.49%) parents who participated in the survey are continuers (Figure 3), so being male or female does not seem to influence whether or not a parent is a continuer (stayer) or an early-leaver (exiter). In other words, there is no evidence to suggest that male parents are more likely to be early-leavers or continuers than female parents or the other way round.

All 4 parents (100%) in the youngest age bracket (19-35 years) are continuers, while 5 out of the 8 parents in the 51-60 age bracket (62.5%) are continuers and the rest (37.5%) are early-leavers. For the other age brackets, the percentage of continuers (50%) was equal to that of early-leavers (50%). Therefore, although a higher percentage of parents in the 51-60 age bracket were continuers, lack of differences in the percentage of early-leavers and continuers in the other age

Table 4. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by age bracket

Age bracket (years)	Continuers (%)	Early-Leavers (%)	Total (N)
19-35	100.00	0.00	4
36-50	50.00	50.00	46
51-60	62.50	37.50	8
Above 60	50.00	50.00	2
Total (N)	33	27	60
Total (%)	55.00	45.00	100.00

Source: SQ4, N=60

brackets and the fact that the 51-60 age bracket constitutes a small proportion of the surveyed parents (13.3%) seems to suggest that the age of the parent does not significantly influence the choice to continue or exit the originally chosen school.

Table 5. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by marital status

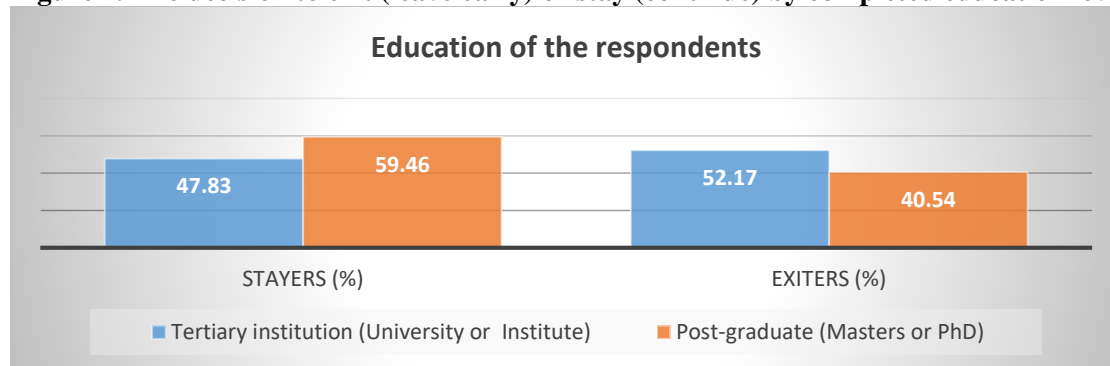
Marital status	Continuers (%)	Early-Leavers (%)	Total (N)
Single	100.00	0.00	1
Married	57.41	42.59	54
Divorced	0.00	100.00	2
Separated	50.00	50.00	2
Widowed	0.00	100.00	1
Total (N)	33	27	60
Total (%)	55.00	45.00	100.00

Source: SQ5, N=60

As shown earlier, 54 of the 60 parents (90%) who participated in the survey are married; and the proportion of married parents who are continuers (57.41%) is much higher than that of married early-leavers (42.59%) (Table 5). These two statistics (a large proportion of married parents in the survey and a larger proportion of marrieds among the continuers than early-leavers) suggest a higher tendency among married parents to be continuers than early-leavers.

Regarding parents' education, the proportion of parents with post-graduate degrees (masters or PhD) is higher among the continuers (59.46%) than early-leavers (40.54%); while the proportion of parents who are graduates of University or Tertiary education institutions is higher among early-leavers (52.17%) than continuers (47.83%). This suggests that there is a higher tendency for more

Figure 4. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by completed education level



Source: SQ6, N=60

highly educated parents to be continuers than early-leavers; and for less highly educated parents to be early-leavers than continuers as shown in Figure 4.

Religious affiliation appears to have an influence choice of Christian education; and on whether a parent is an early-leaver or a continuer. As mentioned earlier the majority of parents in the study sample are affiliated with Pentecostal (53.3%) and Protestant Anglican (33.3%) churches; and there are higher proportions of Pentecostals (56.25%) and Protestant Anglicans (55%) among the continuers than early-leavers (43.75% of Pentecostals and 45% of Anglicans), which suggests that Pentecostals and Anglicans have a higher tendency to be continuers than early-leavers (Table 6).

Table 6. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by religious affiliation

Religious affiliation	Continuers (%)	Early-Leavers (%)	Total (N)
Catholic	50.00	50.00	4
Other	33.33	66.67	3
Pentecostal	56.25	43.75	32
Protestant Anglican	55.00	45.00	20
SDA	100.00	0.00	1
Total (N)	33	27	60
Total (%)	55.00	45.00	100.00

Source: SQ7, N=60

At the lowest levels of involvement in church activities (no times and one time) there are higher proportions of continuers (66.7% for no times and 61.54% for one time) than early-leavers (33.3% for no times and 38.46% for one time). However, this is also true at the highest level of involvement in church activities (four times or more) for which the proportion of continuers (65.38%) is much higher than that for early-leavers (34.62%). It is only for the mid-levels (two and three times) that the proportions of early-leavers (63.64% for two times and 100% for three) are higher than continuers (Table 7). So there appears to be no clear relationship between the level of involvement in church activities and the likelihood of being a continuer or early-leaver.

Table 7. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by the level of involvement in Church activities

Number of times in past 2 weeks	Continuers (%)	Early-Leavers (%)	Total (N)
No times	66.67	33.33	6
One time	61.54	38.46	13
Two times	36.36	63.64	11
Three times	0.00	100.00	4
Four times or more	65.38	34.62	26
Total (N)	33	27	60
Total (%)	55.00	45.00	100.00

Source: SQ20, N=60

Of the 60 parents who participated in this study, 54 (90%) engaged in personal Bible study nearly every day or several times a week; and of these, 29 parents (53.7%) are continuers and 25 (46.3%) are early-leavers (Table 8). However, out of the 6 parents who read the Bible only once or not at all, 4 (66.7%) are continuers. Therefore, the level of engagement in personal Bible study does not seem to have a clear relationship with the tendency of the parent to leave early or a continue.

Table 8. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by level of engagement in Bible study

Frequency of engagement	Continuers (%)	Early-Leavers (%)	Total (N)
Nearly every day	57.14	42.86	35
Several times	47.37	52.63	19
Once	60.00	40.00	5
Not at all	100.00	0.00	1
Total (N)	33	27	60
Total (%)	55.00	45.00	100.00

Source: SQ21, N=60

Similarly, 58 of the 60 respondents (96.7%) engaged in personal prayer nearly every day or several times during the past one week, and 31 (53.4%) of these are continuers while 27 (46.6%) are early-leavers. However, even the 2 parents who engaged in personal prayer either once in a week or not at all are continuers (Table 9). Therefore, similar to Bible study, the level of engagement in personal prayer does not seem to have a clear relationship with the tendency of the parent to be an early-leaver or a continuer.

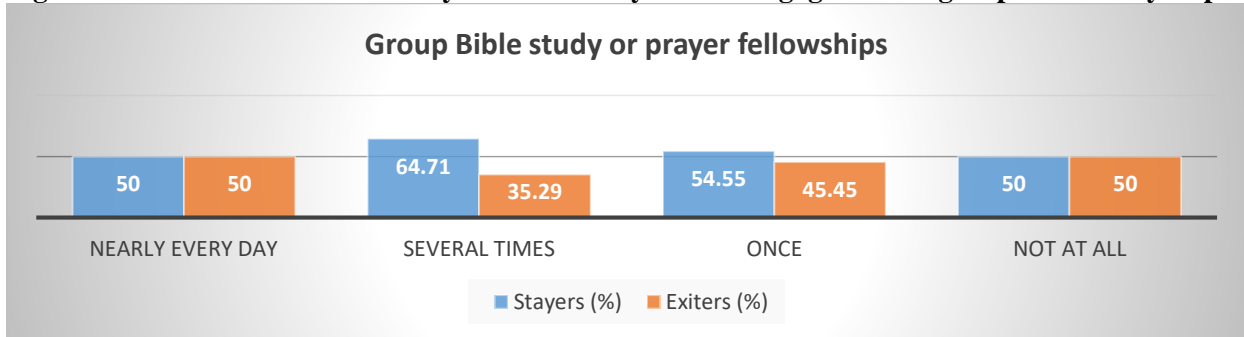
Table 9. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by the level of engagement in personal prayer

Frequency of engagement	Continuers (%)	Early-Leavers (%)	Total (N)
Nearly every day	55.32	44.68	47
Several times	45.45	54.55	11
Once	100.00	0.00	1
Not at all	100.00	0.00	1
Total (N)	33	27	60
Total (%)	55.00	45.00	100.00

Source: SQ21, N=60

Half (50%) the parents who engaged in group Bible study or prayer nearly every day or not at all in the past week are continuers, and the other half are early-leavers (Figure 5). However, among the 28 parents who engaged in group Bible study or prayer at least once to several times in a week, 17(60.7%) are continuers and 11 (39.3%) are early-leavers. The higher percentage of continuers (60.7%) than early-leavers (39.3%) among parents with mid-level engagement in group Bible study or prayer (once to several times in a week) suggests that parents who engage in group Bible study or prayer fellowships are more likely to be continuers than early-leavers.

Figure 5. The decision to leave early or continue by level of engagement in group Bible study or prayer



Source: SQ21, N=60

Table 10. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by level of engagement with Christian Radio or TV programs

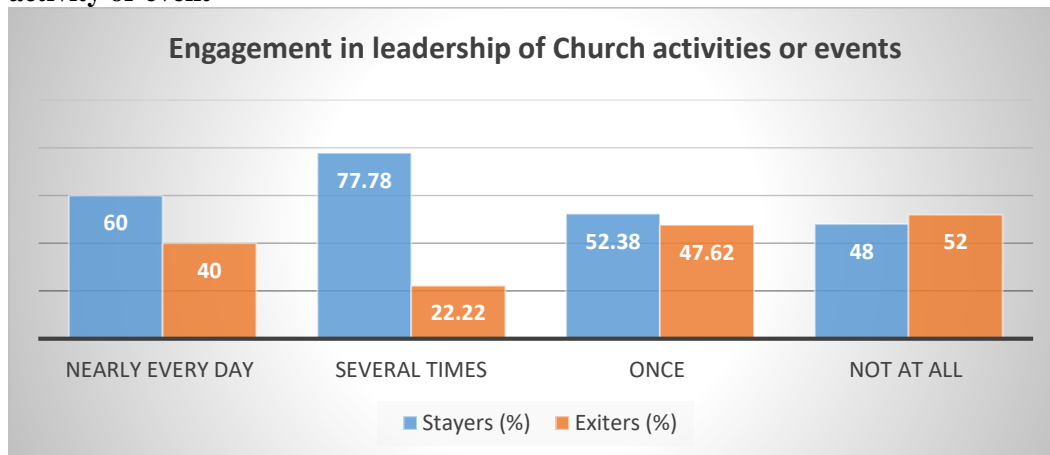
Frequency of engagement	Continuers (%)	Early-Leavers (%)	Total (N)
Nearly every day	59.26	40.74	27
Several times	59.09	40.91	22
Once	40.00	60.00	5
Not at all	33.33	66.67	6
Total (N)	33	27	60
Total (%)	55.00	45.00	100.00

Source: SQ21, N=60

Of the 60 surveyed parents, 49 (81.7%) listened to a Christian radio or TV program nearly every day or several times in a week; and of these 59.2% are continuers and 40.8% are early-leavers. However, for the 11 parents who listened to a Christian radio or TV program once a week or not at all, 63.6% are early-leavers and only 36.4% are continuers (Table 10). This suggests that parents who frequently listen to a Christian radio or TV program are more likely to continue than leave early.

Of the 60 surveyed parents, 35(58.3%) engaged in the leadership of a church activity or event at least once a week; and of these, 21 parents (60%) are continuers and 14 (40%) are early-leavers. However, out of the 25 parents who did not lead any church activity or event in the past week, 52% are early-leavers and 48% are continuers (Figure 6). Therefore, there is a higher tendency for parents who engage in the leadership of church activities or events to continue than leave early.

Figure 6. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by engagement in the leadership of Church activity or event



Source: SQ21, N=60

Table 11. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by type of family

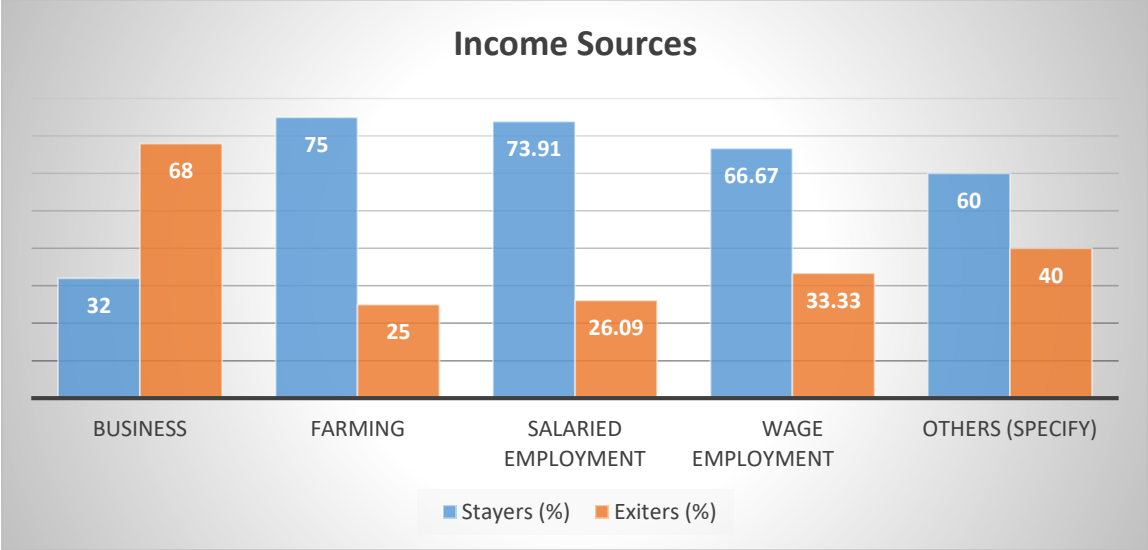
Type of family	Continuers (%)	Early-Leavers (%)	Total (N)
Nuclear family	57.41	42.59	54
Single-parent family	40.00	60.00	5
Guardianship family	0.00	100.00	1
Total (N)	33	27	60
Total (%)	55.00	45.00	100.00

Source: SQ22, N=60

Majority (90%) of the surveyed parents (54 out of 60) live in a nuclear type of family; and out of these, 57.4% are continuers and 42.59% are early-leavers. For the rest of the parents in non-nuclear families, 66.7% are early-leavers and 33.3% are continuers (Table 11). This clearly shows a higher tendency for parents in nuclear families to be continuers than early-leavers.

The main family income source for 25 of the 60 surveyed parents (41.7%) is business; and the majority of those primarily deriving their livelihood from business (68%) are early-leavers (Figure 7). For the rest of the 35 parents whose main family income source is farming, wage or salary employment and others, 71.4% are continuers and only 28.6% are early-leavers. This shows a higher tendency for parents who primarily derive their livelihood from business to be early-leavers; while those with non-business income sources are more likely to be continuers.

Figure 7. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue) by main family income source

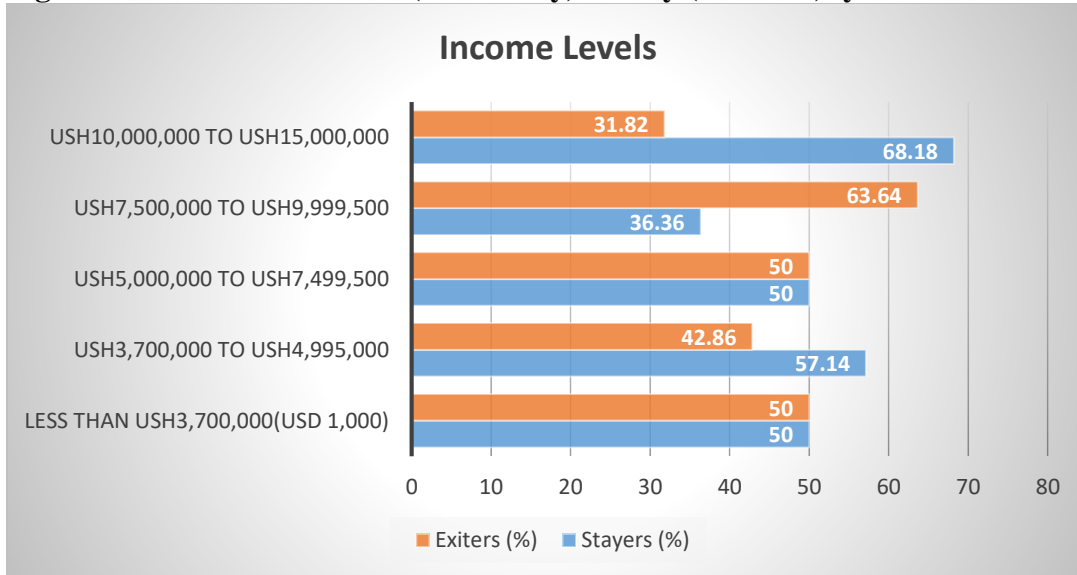


Source: SQ23, N=60

About a third of the surveyed parents (22 out of 60) are in the top monthly income bracket of Ush10,000,000 to Ush15,000,000; and the majority of these (68.18%) are continuers and only 31.82% are early-leavers (Figure 8). For the rest of the income brackets, the percentage of early-leavers is either equal to or much higher than that of continuers with the exception of the Ush3,700,000 to Ush4,995,000 income bracket for which the percentage of continuers (57.14%) is higher than that of early-leavers

(42.86%). Generally, there appears to be a higher tendency for parents earning higher income to continue than leave early.

Figure 8. The decision to exit (leave early) or stay (continue)by income bracket



Source: SQ24, N=60

4.4 Factors influencing school choice decisions

In seeking to answer the central research question “Why do some students enrolled in international Christian schools exit before they graduate from high school?”, it is essential to first understand parents’ reasons for initially choosing international Christian schools for their children. So, the first subsidiary question for this study is “For what reasons do parents enroll their children in international Christian schools?” To answer this question, parents were asked to follow a pre-defined list of factors and indicate whether they strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree that they considered the listed factor when choosing an international Christian School for their children. The listing of factors hypothesized to influence parents’ decisions on school choice was guided by literature on school choice (Hall, 2009 and Valentine, 2016). During data analysis, these factors were grouped into various categories as shown in Table 12a below based on the similarity of context, following Hall (2009).

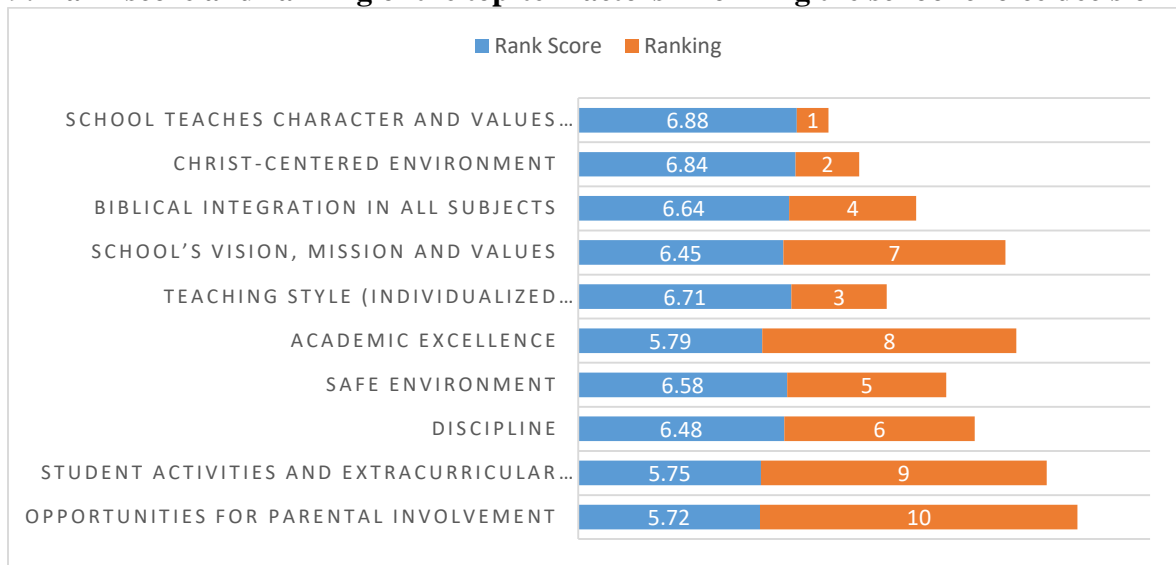
Table 12a. Grouping of reasons for choosing international Christian schools

1. Location	The school is located close to my home or place of work.
2. Social connections	My child's friends attend the school; My relatives or friends' children attend the school, Recommendations by a parent of the school, friend or relative; Having another child in the same school.
3. Academic quality	Academic Excellence; Teaching style; Technology integration in teaching and learning of all subjects
4. Student/parent experience	Ethnically diverse environment; Opportunities for parental involvement
5. School environment	School has good physical facilities; Discipline; Safe environment; Class Size; School Size
6. Spiritual Factors	Christ-centered environment; School teaches character and values that other schools do not; School's Vision, Mission and Values; Biblical integration in all subjects
7. Personnel	Quality of teachers; School Principal; School Directors.
8. Financial Factors	School Fees compared to similar schools
9. Extra/Co-Curricular Factors	Student activities and extracurricular programs

Among the factors parents considered when choosing schools for their children, the top ten ranking include (in descending order) character and values taught by the school; Christ-centered environment; teaching style (individualized curriculum); Biblical integration in all subjects; safe environment; discipline; school vision, mission and values; academic excellence; extracurricular activities; and opportunities for parental involvement. Among these, four are categorized as spiritual factors (character and values; Christ-centered environment; Biblical integration in all subjects; and school vision, mission and values). Two factors are related to academic quality (teaching style and academic excellence); another two are categorized as school environment (safe environment and discipline); one as extracurricular (extracurricular activities). and the last one as student/parent experience (opportunities for parental involvement) (see figure 9 and Table 12b, Appendix A).

It is interesting to note that although international Christian Schools in Uganda are generally more costly than government-aided schools because of being privately owned, the financial factor (low school fees charged by the school compared to other schools) was ranked number 22 close to the bottom of the list of 24 factors (see Table 12b, Appendix A).

Figure 9. Rank score and ranking of the top-ten factors informing the school choice decision



Source SQ11, N=55 (5 Non-response)

This means that while a large proportion of the surveyed parents do not agree that the school fees charged by the international Christian School they chose compare favorably to other similar schools, they went ahead and chose it anyway; which implies that the issue of money was a more peripheral consideration in the school choice decision than, for example, spiritual factors, academic quality, school environment and extracurricular activities. This is consistent with the findings of Hall (2009) that the primary reason why parents in the USA choose nondenominational Christian education is that they want their children to have a strong moral and ethical foundation, a safe and nurturing environment, and a high-quality education that integrates faith and academics. This suggests a need for Christian schools to find the right balance between faith-based or spiritual and academic factors as well as extracurricular activities.

There are also several other factors that ranked more highly than finances, including class sizes, location of the school relative to home or workplace, quality of teachers and social connections, such as having another child in the same school and referral by another parent of the school or relative or friend (see Table 12b, Appendix A).

Parents were also asked if they considered any other factors when choosing a school besides those listed in the questionnaire and their responses included the period the school has been in existence, a school curriculum that does not overload children with academic work, the character and testimony of the founders which led them to start a Christian school, Christian values, God-centered education system, acceptance of learners with special needs, caring School staff that give a keen attention to students, the caliber of parents in the school, cleanliness of the school environment, and the school menu.

4.5 Factors influencing school exit decisions

To answer the central research question “Why do some students enrolled in international Christian schools exit before they graduate from high school?”, parents whose children exited international Christian schools before completing high school were asked to follow a pre-defined list of factors and indicate whether they strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree that they considered the listed factors when choosing to exit the initially chosen international Christian School for their children. The listing of factors hypothesized to influence parents’ decisions to exit the initially chosen Christian school was guided by Hall (2009); and these factors were grouped into various categories as shown in Table 13a. below based on the similarity of context (Hall, 2009).

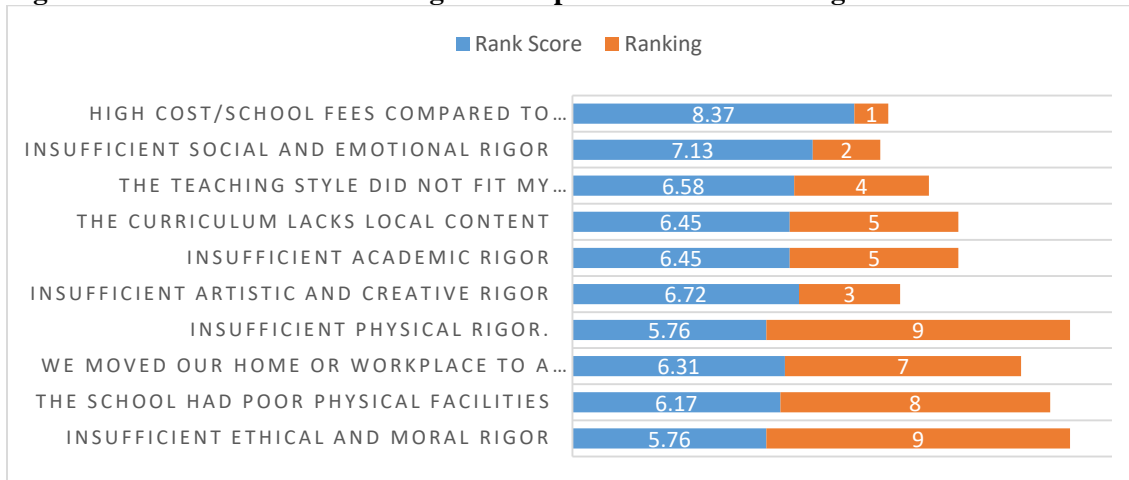
Table 13a. Grouping of reasons for exiting the initially chosen international Christian school

1. Location	We moved our home or workplace to a location far away from the school
2. Social connections	My child's friends left the school, My relatives or friends’ children left the school
3. Academic quality	Insufficient Academic Rigor, Insufficient integration of Technology in teaching and learning of different subjects, Curriculum lacks local content
4. Student/parent experience	My child or children did not like the school anymore, Insufficient Social and Emotional Rigor, The teaching style did not fit my child/ children learning style, Limited ethnic diversity, Limited opportunities for parental involvement, My child failed to fit in the school system
5. School environment	The school had poor physical facilities, The school was weak on discipline, Large class size, Small school size/population, Unsafe school environment
6. Spiritual Factors	Insufficient Ethical and Moral Rigor, Lack of shared values and beliefs

7. Personnel	Poor quality of teachers and other staff, Misunderstandings with school administration
8. Financial Factors	High Cost/School Fees compared to similar schools
9. Extra/Co-Curricular Factors	Insufficient Physical Rigor, Insufficient Artistic and Creative Rigor

Among the factors parents considered when choosing to exit the initially chosen international Christian school for their children, the top ten rankings included (in descending order) high cost/school fees compared to similar schools; insufficient social and emotional rigor; insufficient artistic and creative rigor; the teaching style (individualized curriculum) did not fit my child/children learning style; insufficient academic rigor; the curriculum lacks local content; moved home or workplace to a location far away from the school; poor school physical facilities; insufficient ethical and moral rigor and insufficient physical rigor.

Figure 10. Rank score and ranking of the top-ten factors informing the exit decision



Source SQ13, N=27

Among these factors, the top most is financial (high cost of school fees compared to other schools); two are related to student/parent experience (insufficient social and emotional rigor and the teaching style did not fit my child/children learning style); another two are related to academic quality (insufficient academic rigor and the curriculum lacks local content); and another two are categorized as extracurricular (insufficient physical rigor and insufficient artistic and creative rigor).

Out of the three remaining factors in the top ten, only one is spiritual (insufficient ethical and moral rigor) and is ranked in the ninth position together with an extracurricular activity; and the other two are related to location (moved home or workplace to a location far away from the school) and school environment (poor school physical facilities).

So, whereas spiritual factors were central and financial factors subordinate in school choice decisions, when it came to the decision to exit the initially chosen school, these two switched positions as financial factors became central and spiritual factors subordinate. During the personal interviews, one parent intimated that, parents evolve in the choices they make for their children depending on the prevailing circumstances. This means that whereas spiritual factors were considered to be paramount at enrollment, other emerging factors compelled them to move. It is not clear whether parents who chose to exit got financial challenges along the way that made them feel that the school charged higher school fees compared to similar schools; or if the schools they chose increased fees along the way and became more costly than similar schools; or if they felt they were not getting value for money, which could be indicative of a failure to meet expectations or clarify expectations at the onset. Either way, Christian schools may need to find alternative strategies for funding their budgets without increasing school fees in order to remain competitive in a market where competition is on the rise. One way to achieve this is through increased enrollment to take advantage of the economies of scale associated with a larger student body. Caution, however, needs to be exercised to avoid increasing class sizes to a level that pushes some students to exit early as large class sizes ranked thirteenth among the factors underlying the school exit decision.

The elevated importance of student/parent experience factors in the school exit decision compared to the school choice decision is also instructive. Whereas only one factor related to student/parent experience (opportunities for parental involvement) was among the top ten that

informed the school choice decisions (and ranked tenth), two student/parent experience-related factors featured among the top 10 that informed the school exit decisions. These include “the teaching style did not fit my child/children’s learning style” which ranked second; and “insufficient social and emotional rigor”, which ranked fourth. This gives more credence to the issue of expectations not being clarified at the onset or not being met, which then makes parents feel like they are paying more and getting less compared to other schools. It may be helpful, therefore, for Christian schools to invest more time in clarifying and managing the expectations and experiences of the parents and students they enroll in to avoid disgruntlement and early exit. For example, while the individualized teaching style and attention in the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum enhance academic quality through one-on-one engagement between the student and the teacher, there may be students who learn better in a classroom setting with the teacher playing the role of an instructor. Identifying such students early enough and working together with their parents to address the challenges they face in an individualized setting may help to manage the expectations and experiences of the students to minimize early exit because of the failure of the teaching style to fit the children’s learning style. Adopting a blended approach that combines individual attention and teacher-centered instruction might also be helpful.

The other key factors in the top ten list that informed the decision to exit the initially chosen Christian school are related to academic quality (insufficient academic rigor and lack of local content curriculum) and extracurricular activities (insufficient physical rigor and insufficient artistic and creative rigor). Academic excellence and extracurricular activities were among the top ten factors that informed the school choice decisions so it is understandable why failure to meet parents’ expectations in these areas would lead to their early exit. Regarding academic rigor, a few parents whose children graduated through Christian schools using the ACE curriculum lamented that the

curriculum is weak in science subjects at the high school level to the extent that their children struggled to get admitted into Universities of their choice in the US and Europe after completing high school.

Parents were also asked if they considered any other factors when exiting the originally chosen school besides those listed in the questionnaire and their responses included the inability of the school and teachers to treat children individually and respect the fact that they are different, lack of community involvement where the school is located, lack of school support when it comes to transitioning to other vocations or higher centers of learning, and the curriculum did not encourage out of the box thinking.

When asked what it would take for parents to consider re-enrolling their children in a Christian international school after exiting from the initially chosen school, common responses in the area of academics included strengthening academics, especially in the science subjects; inclusion of final diplomas like in other curriculum types such as the International Baccalaureate (IB), conducting regular rigorous checks on students to ensure mastery of concepts instead of rushing to complete the curriculum, international exposure and lack of local content, among others. One of the possible reasons why the curriculum may be perceived to be weak in the area of science subjects could be because some of the science-oriented courses that parents want their children to take at the University level are not available at the bachelor's degree level in the USA, for example, the medical degree. Because students aspiring for medical school have to first complete a bachelor's degree in sciences (pre-med) before applying to medical school, it is understandable why a US-based curriculum such as ACE could be weak in sciences at the high school level. It may be important, therefore, for Christian schools to borrow from other curriculums to strengthen the ACE curriculum in the area of sciences. Because the ACE curriculum is US-based, the content of various arts subjects

such as social studies, geography and history is limited to the USA to the extent that Ugandan students on the ACE curriculum know more about the geography and history of the USA than Uganda. This is another gap that Christian schools using the ACE curriculum must endeavor to close by incorporating learning based on local content.

On the issue of extracurricular activities, most international Christian schools do not have adequate space to provide a variety of extracurricular activities, particularly in the area of sports for the students. This is a critical area that schools must invest in, not just because parents demand it, but more so because of the way extracurricular activities do complement academic performance in several ways, including skills development in the areas of teamwork, leadership, time management, and discipline, which can positively impact their academic performance. Engaging in extracurricular activities helps students develop a well-rounded personality by promoting creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, which can enhance their overall academic performance. Students who are actively involved in extracurricular activities are often more motivated to excel academically because it enhances their sense of purpose, motivation, and engagement, which can translate into increased focus and dedication towards their academic pursuits. By pursuing their interests and passions outside the classroom through participation in extracurricular activities, students can find a healthy balance between academics and other aspects of their lives, leading to reduced stress levels and improved academic performance. Extracurricular activities also offer opportunities for students to interact with peers who share similar interests, which fosters social skills, emotional intelligence, and a sense of belonging, which can positively impact their overall well-being and academic performance. Admission committees in various Universities also review the extra-curricular activities listed on students' college applications to decide whether to offer admission to applicants. So, it critical that Christian schools invest more

into developing their extracurricular activities programs. However, it is equally important to find a balance between academics and extracurricular activities to ensure that academic performance is not negatively affected by strengthening the extracurricular activities program.

Other mentioned changes that would need to occur in Christian schools before parents would consider re-enrolling their children after exiting one include improved governance structures, parental involvement, improvement in parents’ financial status by having more regular income, school fees equaling what the schools offer (value for money), more affordable fees or reduction in school fees structures, small class sizes, skills development beyond the core academic subjects, improvement in the quality of teachers by hiring teachers who are qualified in the teaching profession, greater emphasis on discipline, and improved school facilities.

4.6 Factors influencing the decision to retain children in the initially chosen Christian school

Parents who retained or committed to retain their children at the initially chosen Christian school were asked to follow a pre-defined list of factors and indicate whether they strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree that they considered the listed factors when deciding to retain their children at the initially chosen international school. Similar to the earlier questions that this study undertook to answer, the listing of factors hypothesized to influence parents’ decisions to retain their children at the initially chosen Christian school was guided by Hall (2009); and these factors were grouped into various categories as shown in Table 14a below based on the similarity of context (Hall, 2009).

Table 14a. Reasons for retaining/committing to retain children at the initially chosen international Christian school

1. Location:	The school location is close to my home or place of work
2. Social connections	My child's friends attend the school, My relatives or friends’ children attend the school, I have another child or children in the same school, Recommendations of a parent, friend or relative
3. Academic quality	Sufficient Academic Rigor, Sufficient integration of Technology in teaching and learning of different subjects, Sufficient local content in school curriculum

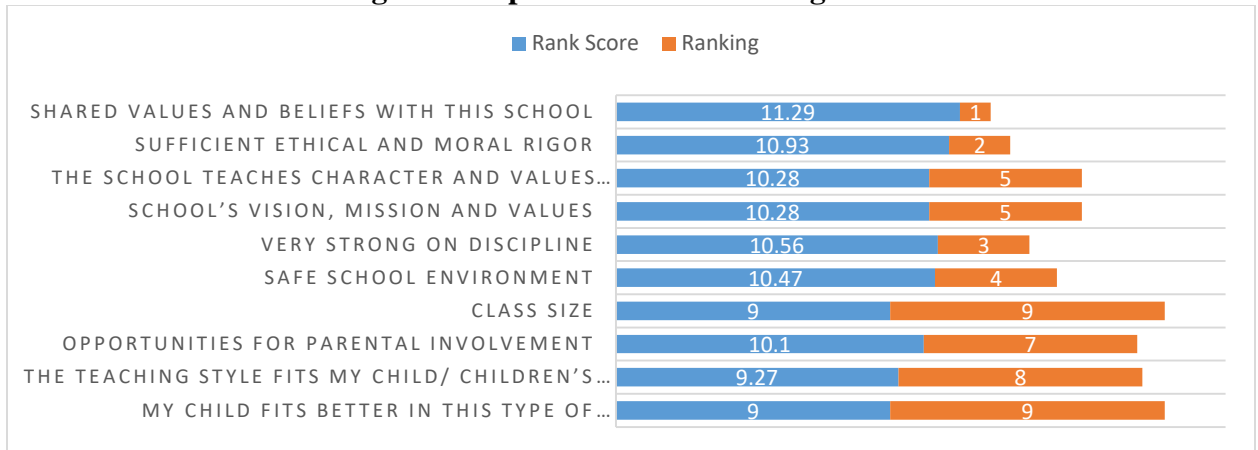
4. Student/parent experience	My child or children always wanted to go to this school, Sufficient Social and Emotional Rigor, The teaching style fits my child’s learning style, and My child fits better in this type of school, This type of school provides education that is tailored to my child’s needs and interests, Ethnically diverse environment, Opportunities for parental involvement
5. School environment	Very good physical facilities, The school is very strong on discipline, class size, school size, and safe school environment
6. Spiritual Factors	Sufficient Ethical and Moral Rigor, Shared values and beliefs with this school, School’s Vision, Mission and Values, The school teaches character and values that other schools do not
7. Personnel	Very good quality of teachers and other staff, The Principal, The Directors
8. Financial Factors	Low/affordable Costs/Fees compared to other schools
9. Extra/Co-Curricular Factors	Sufficient Physical Rigor, Sufficient Artistic and Creative Rigor

Among the factors parents considered when choosing to retain their children at the initially chosen international Christian School, the top ten rankings included (in descending order) shared values and beliefs with the school; sufficient ethical and moral rigor; very strong on discipline; safe school environment; school’s vision, mission and values; the school teaches character and values that other schools do not; opportunities for parental involvement; the teaching style fits my child’s learning style; class size; and my child fits better in this type of school/system. Among these, four are categorized as spiritual factors (shared values and beliefs; sufficient ethical and moral rigor; school vision, mission and values; and the school teaches character and values that other schools do not). Three factors are related to the school environment (very strong discipline, safe school environment and class size); and the remaining three are related to student/parent experience (opportunities for parental involvement, the teaching style fits my child/children’s learning style, and my child fits better in this type of school/system). For other factors that informed the parents’ decision to retain their children in the same Christian school until completion of high school, see Table 14b, Appendix A.

For parents choosing to retain their children in the initially chosen Christian schools (continuers), key factor categories that informed the school choice decision remained central to the

retention decision. These include spiritual factors as well as those related to the school environment. Factors related to student/parent experience gained prominence in the retention decision relative to the school choice decision; while factors related to academic quality and extracurricular activities fell back in ranking in the retention decision compared to the school choice decision. This does not necessarily mean that academics and extracurricular activities are not valued by continuers; but rather that those who choose to stay are willing to trade off academic quality and extracurricular activities for spiritual factors as well as a good school environment and student/parent experience.

Figure 11. Rank score and ranking of the top-ten factors informing the retention decision



Source SQ17, N=33

As one continuer put it during the personal interviews, “The primary thing is the values. People can accumulate certificates later in life. It is important to get the values entrenched early in life. If the children lag behind in academic achievement; that’s okay. They can pick those up later in life and catch up, but it is very difficult to catch up on values.”

The main difference between continuers and early-leavers is that continuers tend to prioritize factors related to spiritual growth, school environment and student/parent experience in their decision to stay; while early-leavers tend to prioritize factors related to finances, student/parent experience, academic quality and extracurricular activities in their decision to exit. Whereas continuers also acknowledged some gaps in academic and extracurricular programs, they seemed to

be more willing than early-leavers to trade these off for spiritual factors. This seems to suggest that continuers more likely chose Christian education out of conviction that it is the way God intended for them to educate their children according His Word which they must consistently follow; and not a preference that they can change depending on the circumstances, which is why spiritual factors appear a non-negotiable to continuers but not early-leavers (at least not all). Therefore, to enhance retention, Christian schools need to not only continue to focus on the spiritual development of the children (building godly character and values), but also on finding and maintaining a balance between spiritual growth, academic rigor, extracurricular activities, student/parent experience and affordability of the education they offer.

4.7 Personal Interview Findings

In addition to the survey questionnaire, this study conducted personal interviews with 18 of the 60 respondents who submitted completed online questionnaires. At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate if they were willing to participate in a follow-up physical or virtual interview to clarify any aspects of the survey and share more about their experience with Christian education and Christian school in Uganda; and 35 respondents expressed willingness. However, only 18 managed to make time for the interview; and of these 10 were continuers while 8 were early-leavers. All 18 interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom and were recorded with the respondents' consent.

The following questions formed the basis of the interview:

1. Why a Christian school?
2. What factors did you consider when choosing the particular Christian school among the many?
3. Did the school meet your expectations or were you somewhat disappointed?

4. Did you move them from the Christian school you had initially chosen to another school or home school before they completed high school (Grade 12)?
5. If you did not move your child or children from the initially chosen Christian school to another school, what convicted you to commit to this school until your children complete high school?
6. For the children that you moved from the Christian school you had initially chosen, to what type of school did you take them?
7. What would need to change for you to reconsider enrolling your child or children in a Christian International School in the future?
8. Is there anything more that you would like to share regarding your experience with Christian education or Christian schools in Uganda or anything we have not touched that you want to add?

All information gathered during the interviews was transcribed, and the themes that emerged from coding the responses by continuers to the above questions are summarized in Table 15 below

Table 15. Themes from Continuers' Responses

Why a Christian school?	Why a particular school?	Areas of satisfaction	Areas of dissatisfaction	Anything more?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Christian values -Christian environment -Individual attention -Independence -Word of God -Christian foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recommendation -Knowing the founders -Proximity -Warm reception -Affordable school fees -Only Christian school at the time -Small school -Small class size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Christian values -Leadership skills -Life skills -Excellence -Opportunity for parental engagement -Quality of teachers -Receptive and responsive school administration -Communication -Godly environment -School vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gaps in academic quality in science subjects -Gaps in the extracurricular program -Lack of local content in arts subjects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cost of Christian education -Career guidance -Uganda National Students Convention (UNSC).

Among the continuers, the main reasons for enrolling their children in a Christian school included Christian values and environment, individual attention to the children, deliberate efforts to develop children's independence, grounding in the Word of God, and building a strong Christian foundation for the children. The choice of a particular Christian school was based on recommendations from acquaintances whose children go the same school, knowledge of the founders, proximity to home or workplace, warm reception and good impression at a first school visit, affordable school fees, being the only known Christian school at the time, small school and class size. The continuers affirmed that the school they chose met their expectations, with some adding that their expectations were superseded. Children picked up Christian values as well as leadership and life skills, and were given a platform to excel academically and in extracurricular activities; and being a day school enables parents to participate daily in the learning journey of their children, and, thus complementing school efforts. Other reasons for parent satisfaction include approachable, friendly and competent teachers; a school administration that is receptive and responsive to feedback from parents; good communication between parents and the school; a godly school environment; and a clear and compelling vision of the school and the passion of the school administration and staff in pursuing that vision.

However, some continuers noted that much as they are committed to keeping their children in the school until grade 12, they were concerned about the adequacy of the curriculum to equip science-oriented students for college; and the preparedness of the school to go beyond the curriculum to close the gaps in science subjects. But there are also those who are content irrespective of the perceived gaps in academics. To quote one parent; "The primary thing is the values. People can accumulate certificates later in life. It is important to get the values entrenched early in life. If the children lag behind in academic achievement; that's okay. They can pick those

up later in life and catch up, but it is very difficult to catch up on values.” This resonates with a quote attributed to Frederick Douglass, “it is easier to build strong boys than repair broken men.” A few parents also added that despite their decision to stay in the school, there are gaps in the extracurricular programs that they felt the schools should work to close. However, some parents also acknowledged that their schools are small in size, and the schools don’t have economies of scale to provide everything the children need, so they have chosen to be content with what the school can offer. To quote one parent “Yes, the school is small and not competing well in sports and other extracurricular activities, but I take it as my responsibility to complement what the school does instead of complaining.” Concern was also expressed about the lack of local content in the curriculum for arts subjects, such as history and geography; a concern that some schools have addressed by borrowing from the national curriculum to add local content.

When prompted to share more about their experience with Christian education or Christian schools in Uganda beyond what had been covered in the interview, issues about the cost of Christian education, career guidance and the Uganda National Students Conventions (UNSC) were mentioned. It was noted that Christian education is quite expensive and not affordable to many parents, so schools were advised to find ways to make it more affordable so that even children from not-well-to do families can afford it. A related suggestion was for schools to consider children from less privileged families by allowing their parents to make part-payment of school fees instead of compelling everyone to complete the payment at the beginning of the school term. The need for career guidance talks to help the children become aware and think through the career options available, while at the same time being flexible and open to new options that may become available in the future was also mentioned. Finally, the UNSC was described as a great experience that gave children a chance to pick up boarding school experience and survival skills and a competitive spirit

against themselves, seeking to do better each time. Requiring the UNSC activities to have ministry value was appreciated for enabling children to bring their energy into good space rather than a dangerous space, especially unique challenges as teenagers.

The themes that emerged from coding the responses by early-leavers during the personal interview questions are summarized in Table 16 below. Similar to continuers, the main reasons early-leavers gave for enrolling their children in a Christian school included Christian values, deliberate efforts to develop children’s independence, and grounding in the Word of God.

Table 16. Themes from Early-Leavers’ Responses

Why Christian school?	Why particular school?	Reasons for moving	Exit option chosen	What would need to change reconsider Christian school in future?	Anything more?
-Christian values - Independence -Word of God	-Knowing the founders -Proximity -Only Christian school at the time -Small class size	-Financial -Poor quality of teachers -Lack of academic rigor -Lack of local content -Teaching style not matching learning style of some students -Lack of ethnic diversity -Diagnostic testing -School meals -Inadequate extracurricular program	-Another Christian school using the same curriculum -Homeschool using the same curriculum -Secular international school	-Financial situation -Extracurricular program - Academic rigor for science subjects -Mode of delivery -Local content for arts subjects	-Rivalry among schools -Lack of parents’ voice -Flexible business model -Boarding facilities - Uganda National Students Convention (UNSC) -Considering other beliefs

However, in addition to these, the early-leavers added academic rigor and global exposure¹⁰, which continuers did not mention. The choice of a particular Christian school by early-

¹⁰ The issue about global exposure relates to having very few or no international students in the school population to present the local (Ugandan) students with the opportunity to learn from and interact with students from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Ethnic diversity is lacking in many ACE schools.

leavers was based on knowledge of the founders, proximity to home or workplace, being the only known Christian school at the time, and small class size. Some of the early-leavers said the schools they chose initially met their expectations in terms of Christian values and principles, which were espoused by the schools and enabled the children to receive a great foundation on values and practical ways to live out their faith. The schools also had a good stand on discipline and provided a nice environment for children to blossom in different areas. However, with time cracks began to emerge and these were laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated closure of schools for nearly two years, which necessitated switching to online classes. Parents were compelled to step in to support online learning, but the experience of some early-leavers was that although both the support to students' learning and the costs incurred by the schools were reduced significantly following the closure of schools, the schools were not willing to reduce the school fees charged to parents. So, the original cause of misunderstandings and dissatisfaction for several of the early-leavers, which contributed to the decision to exit the initially chosen Christian school was financial. As parents continued to interact with the teachers online, some of the early-leavers say they realized that not all the teachers had the right qualifications and pedagogical skills to help the children to learn what they were teaching, which prompted them to start searching for alternatives. It is true that in many ACE schools, not all teachers possess formal training in education. This is because of the flexibility and user-friendliness of the ACE curriculum aimed at enabling parents without educational qualifications to homeschool their children, which raises questions about the strict necessity of formal training for effective teaching within this framework. Based on personal experience running an ACE school, I believe that while having a strong educational background is important and necessary especially in higher grades, it is not always sufficient. We have

encountered qualified teachers who, despite their credentials, have not delivered to our expectations. On the other hand, although some of the most effective educators on our staff are qualified teachers, we also have those without formal qualifications that are performing quite well, demonstrating that passion and skill in handling children can sometimes outweigh formal qualifications in the context of the ACE curriculum. Nonetheless, training in education is beneficial in understanding teaching strategies, learning styles and effective communication with students to facilitate learning. The good news is that the Uganda Christian University (UCU) recently signed a partnership agreement with Accelerated Education Enterprises (AEE) which manages the ACE curriculum in Africa, through which UCU will equip teachers and individuals passionate about teaching with pedagogical skills for effective implementation of the ACE curriculum in schools and among homeschoolers.¹¹ This is a timely initiative to address the parents' concern about lack of pedagogical skills by some teachers in ACE schools.

Other issues raised by early-leavers include inadequate academic rigor especially in science subjects and critical thinking skills, as well as lack of local content in arts subjects, especially geography and history. The Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum was developed in the United States, which explains the greater focus on American history and geography, and limited content addressing other regions, such as South Africa. Although there were initial efforts to incorporate Ugandan content in the curriculum for grades 1 and 2, no further developments have been made since then. Consequently, the responsibility for integrating local content falls on individual schools, which often leads to a dilemma: while schools may choose to teach Ugandan history and geography, this additional material does not contribute to students' official credit requirements. As a result, parents may feel compelled to prioritize the ACE curriculum, which

¹¹ <https://ucu.ac.ug/ucu-to-train-teachers-of-faith-based-curriculum/>

offers recognized accreditation, over local content that enriches cultural understanding but does not translate into academic credit. This challenge can lead to dissatisfaction among parents who value a more relevant and locally-focused education, prompting some to withdraw their children from the program before they complete high school. Similarly, those concerned about academic rigor in the science subjects suggested borrowing from other curriculums, such as the Cambridge and the Uganda curriculum to strengthen the ACE curriculum in the sciences subjects. However, given that the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) has since 2021 recognized the General and Advanced Certificates offered by the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE)—the examining body of the ACE curriculum, which has enabled students to enroll in universities in Uganda through the certificate equation process; and given the large number of ICCE graduates succeeding at various universities across the world (including many achieving firsts, prizes and distinctions) suggests that the concerns about academic rigor are not universally true. What is true is that academic rigor in sciences and other subjects in the ACE curriculum increases gradually from the lower grades through grade 12, reaching the summit at the intermediate and advanced certification levels of the ICCE. So decisions to exit the ACE curriculum based on the science content in the lower grades and not well informed, which calls for intentionality on the part of Christian schools to invest time in clarifying expectations with the parents and students they enroll. The concern about inadequacy of critical thinking skills is based on the perception that by primarily presenting the curriculum content through the Biblical lens, particularly in science and social studies, ACE limits the analysis of different perspectives on certain topics. So the real issue is not lack of critical thinking skills as some broadly put it, but rather that critical thinking is promoted exclusively within the Biblical framework, something for which those convicted about Christian education are unapologetic.

Another issue raised was the inability of the school system to catch students early enough for whom the individualized nature of the curriculum doesn't fit their learning style—causing them to lag behind or be unable to learn. Such students would require a blended approach that combines individualized learning and other methods such as round-table discussions and direct instruction by a teacher in a classroom setting.

Also mentioned was the issue of lack of ethnic diversity in the school and opportunities for children to interface with other cultures and benefit from international and multicultural exposure that is typical of large international schools. To quote one early-leaver, “Once we were sure the foundation was laid and the children’s self-esteem and confidence was built, we chose to move on. We looked for a school that gathers various nationalities and cultures to provide a simulated life scenario of exposure to other cultures and beliefs, because children are not always going to live among people with whom they share the same beliefs or who will be kind and nice to them. We felt children were overprotected in the Christian school, so we wanted to expose them to contexts that would enable them to apply the skills, principles and doctrines learnt in the Christian curriculum.” This desire for international exposure as a reason for early exit from a Christian school contrasts with the views of continuers who remain committed to the ACE curriculum, its shortfalls notwithstanding. These alternative views are well articulated by one continuer in reference to the issue of inadequate academic rigor in the ACE curriculum, whose perspective resonates with the words of Aristotle, that “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all!” This continuer emphasized the importance of getting Christian values entrenched in the children starting at the foundation stage (Proverbs 22:6) even at the expense of academic rigor because while children can easily catch up on academic achievement later in life, it is more challenging to catch up on Christian values. This perspective emphasizes a fundamental difference

in motivations between parents who choose Christian education out of conviction versus those who do so based on preference. For the convicted parents who see Christian education as a moral imperative—viewing it as obedience to the greatest commandment of God—there is a strong commitment to maintaining a values-based education, even at the expense of cultural diversity and academic rigor. Conversely, parents who prioritize exposure to diverse cultures and other non-spiritual aspirations may switch to schools that better align with their perceived educational preferences, as demonstrated by the early leavers who transitioned their children from Christian schools to secular international schools. Ultimately, this discussion reveals a critical tension between the foundational values imparted by the Christian curriculum and the desire for broader cultural engagement and academic achievement. While some parents prioritize the nurturing of character and ethics, others seek environments that provide their children with a more global perspective and higher academic achievement. This divergence in priorities plays a significant role in the decisions parents make regarding their children’s education and underscores the varying interpretations of what constitutes a well-rounded upbringing in today’s interconnected world.

Other unsettling experiences mentioned by early-leavers are related to the way enrolling students from other curriculums were subjected to diagnostic tests and pushed several grades behind; the school lunch program that compromised children’s health and the poor extracurricular program that did not provide value for money.

Among the exit options chosen by the interviewed parents, 1 went to a national school, 8 went to secular international schools, 11 went to other Christian international schools, and 7 decided to homeschool their children. When asked about what needed to change for them to reconsider enrolling their children in a Christian school in the future, one early-leaver mentioned improvement in their financial situation. Others mentioned improvement in the extracurricular

programs and activities to include more rigorous sports; revision of the curriculum to increase local content in arts subjects and academic rigor science subjects; and revision of the mode of delivery to match the learning styles of the different students.

When prompted to share more about their experience with Christian education or Christian schools in Uganda beyond what had been covered in the interview, several issues were mentioned. First is the lack of unity and collaboration among Christian schools to address common problems. Currently there appears to be rivalry and competition, with each school fearing that the other will steal their children and staff; and because of this there is no effort to work together in a complementary way to address common problems in academics, for example. Collaboration only happens in extracurricular activities when students are preparing for the International Students Conventions (ISC) and as a result, Christian service suffers. This rivalry is evident in the hesitancy of several Christian schools to get their parents to participate in this study on school choice and exit. Second is the lack of parents' voice in the management of school affairs because of absence of Associations of Parents and Teachers (PTAs), which are common in national schools, through which parents and teachers appoint people from among them to speak on their behalf to school management. Lack of such structures in Christian schools makes them appear authoritarian, with parents and teachers having little or no say in the running of the schools.

Christian schools were also advised to be flexible in their business model to accommodate homeschoolers for a few days to enable such children to benefit from what schools offer that they cannot get at home, and in return enable schools to earn more money via a blended business model than if they restrict their intake to fulltime students. Another suggestion is for Christian schools to consider providing boarding facilities especially for high school students to allow them more time to study than when they commute, in addition to attracting students from distant places; which

would earn the schools more money and enhance the international experience and exposure of students. Papworth (2014) explored the extent to which boarders—relative to day students at 12 schools across Australia—may gain or decline in academic and non-academic outcomes and found general parity in outcomes between day and boarding students. However, where significant effects emerged, they tended to favor boarders. Bass (2013) also found the boarding school model to be successful at increasing students' exposure to social, cultural, and education capital. About the students' conventions, one parent said these are promoted as an avenue for helping students to earn credit towards their certification, which is not followed through yet parents and children put in a lot of effort and money, only come out with nothing. Finally, one early-leaver advised Christian schools to stop alienating people from other beliefs in order to influence them to embrace Christianity instead of shutting them out. To quote this parent, "Calling yourself a Christian school is more like positioning yourself to preach to the converted while leaving out the un-reached."

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This study undertook to find answers to the research question “Why do some students enrolled in international Christian schools exit before they graduate from high school?” A total of 60 parents who either enrolled their children in a Christian school or withdrew them from one participated in the study by completing an online survey questionnaire, and 18 of these participated in a virtual personal interview conducted via Zoom. Of the 60 parents, 27 (45%) have children who exited the initially chosen Christian school before completion of high school (grade 12), and these are referred to as early-leavers. Of the 27 early-leavers, 1 went to a national school, 8 went to secular international schools, 11 went to other Christian international schools, and 7 decided to homeschool their children. The 33 parents (55%) who retained or committed to retain their children in the initially chosen Christian school until they graduate from high school are referred to as continuers. The fact that early leavers transitioned to various educational settings (national schools, secular international schools, other Christian international schools, and homeschooling) suggests a tendency among some parents to not commit to a particular setting but to instead continue seeking alternatives that they believe better meet their children’s educational needs or those that align better with family circumstances and preferences, which are mutable. The diversity in exit choices could also be indicative of a perception that the alternatives provide better educational opportunities, social environments, or curricular offerings compared to the ACE curriculum, which may point to areas where the ACE curriculum could strengthen its appeal or address specific concerns raised by parents.

The survey findings show that compared to early-leavers, continuers are more likely to be married; more highly educated; engaged in regular Bible study or prayer fellowships; engaged in leadership of church activities or events; belong to nuclear families; have a higher monthly income; and primarily derive their income from “non-business” sources. These findings of demographic and

behavioral differences between early-leavers and continuers in Christian schools following the ACE curriculum provide valuable insights into the motivations and circumstances surrounding parental decisions regarding their children's education. Belonging to nuclear families and being married is indicative of greater family stability, therefore, the fact that continuers are more likely to belong to nuclear families and to be married suggests that family stability may play a role in parents' commitment to Christian education, and to being continuers. In contrast, early leavers could be experiencing family dynamics that might influence educational decisions for their children, such as single-parent households or changes in marital status. Having higher income and primarily earning a living from non-business sources (whose income is more stable than business income) symbolizes greater income stability. The fact that continuers report higher monthly income and primarily derive their income from non-business sources suggests a positive correlation between income level and stability, and being a continuer. This is likely because income stability enables sustained affordability of educational expenses, helping parents to feel financially secure enough to invest in long-term educational commitments, and to find satisfaction in what the originally chosen school offers because they don't feel pressured to switch schools for financial reasons. On the other hand, early leavers might face economic constraints or prioritize financial considerations that lead them to seek alternatives that they perceive to be more affordable. The positive correlation between education and being a continuer could be partly because education and income are positively correlated, but also likely because more educated parents might be better equipped to support their children's learning by navigating the challenges of the ACE curriculum instead of switching to alternatives. Continuers are also more likely to be engaged in religious activities (Bible study and prayer fellowships, and leading church activities) than early-leavers. This is likely because engagement in religious activities reflects a deeper commitment to Christian values, which aligns with the parents' decision to remain in a Christian

school. Such parents would tend to prioritize the spiritual development of their children over other educational metrics, reinforcing the notion that they choose the ACE curriculum out of conviction rather than convenience or preference. These demographic and behavioral differences between early-leavers and continuers suggest that continuers tend to have greater stability in the family structure and income, and stronger engagement in religious/spiritual activities that reflect a deeper commitment to the Christian faith and values; all of which collectively foster commitment and conviction to remain in schools following the ACE curriculum despite its limitations. Designing and implementing a comprehensive admission process that assesses the families' income and social stability, and commitment to the Christian faith, values and education could help school owners to minimize the likelihood of enrolling potential early leavers while maximizing the enrollment of potential continuers.

The study also gathered data on the factors that parents considered when choosing to enroll their children in particular Christian school; and having enrolled them to decide whether to keep them in the school until they complete grade 12 or exit before that. When choosing Christian schools for their children, parents prioritized spiritual factors (character and values; Christ-centered environment; Biblical integration in all subjects; and school vision, mission and values); academic quality (teaching style and academic excellence); school environment (safe environment and discipline); student/parent experience (opportunities for parental involvement) and extracurricular program (extracurricular activities). Financial factors (school fees charged by the school compared to other schools) did not seem to be a major consideration when making the school choice decision.

However, when deciding to exit the initially chosen school, financial factors (school fees charged by the school compared to other schools) came to the forefront, followed by student/parent experience (the teaching style did not fit my child/children learning style and insufficient social and emotional rigor); academic quality (insufficient academic rigor and the curriculum lacks local

content); extracurricular activities (insufficient physical rigor and insufficient artistic and creative rigor); location (moved home or workplace to a location far away from the school), one school environment factor (poor school physical facilities) and one spiritual factor (insufficient ethical and moral rigor). The fact that there was only one spiritual factor among the top 10 influencing the exit decision compared to four in the school choice decision; and that it was ranked ninth out of 10 is instructive. This resonates with the remarks of one early-leaver, that parents evolve in the choices they make for their children depending on the prevailing circumstances. Which raises a pertinent question about the perception of parents who enroll their children in Christian schools; whether they do it out of conviction or just as a preference. A preference is a belief one holds but can abandon when conditions become unfavorable; but a conviction is a belief one holds with such intensity in the depth of their soul that nothing will ever cause them to abandon it.

The elevated importance of student/parent experience factors in the school exit decision compared to the school choice decision is also instructive. Whereas only one factor related to student/parent experience (opportunities for parental involvement) was among the top ten that informed the school choice decisions (and ranked tenth), two student/parent experience-related factors featured among the top 10 that informed the school exit decisions. These include “the teaching style did not fit my child/children’s learning style” which ranked second; and “insufficient social and emotional rigor”, which ranked fourth. Although factors related to academic quality and extracurricular activities were mentioned among the top 10 influencers in both the school choice and exit decisions, they were ranked higher among the top 10 in the exit than the school choice decision.

For parents choosing to retain their children in the initially chosen Christian schools (continuers), key factors that informed the school choice decision remained central to the retention

decision. These include spiritual factors (shared values and beliefs; sufficient ethical and moral rigor; school vision, mission and values; and the school teaches character and values that other schools do not) as well as those related to the school environment (very strong discipline, safe school environment and class size). Factors related to student/parent experience (opportunities for parental involvement, the teaching style fits my child/children's learning style, and my child fits better in this type of school/system) gained prominence in the retention decision relative to the school choice decision; while factors related to academic quality and extracurricular activities fell back in ranking in the retention decision compared to the school choice decision. This does not mean that academics and extracurricular activities are not valued by continuers; but rather that those who choose to continue with the initially chosen school are willing to trade off academic rigor and extracurricular activities for spiritual factors, a good school environment and student/parent experience. As one continuer put it during the personal interviews; "The primary thing is the values. People can accumulate certificates later in life. It is important to get the values entrenched early in life. If the children lag behind in academic achievement; that's okay. They can pick those up later in life and catch up, but it is very difficult to catch up on values."

Overall, the study shows that both continuers and early-leavers consider student/parent experiences in their decisions to stay or exit Christian schools. However, the two categories of parents differ in the sense that whereas continuers tend to prioritize factors related to spiritual growth and school environment in their decision to stay; early-leavers tend to prioritize factors related to finances, academic quality and extracurricular activities in their decision to exit. What is interesting is that although continuers also acknowledged observing some gaps in academic and extracurricular programs as did the early-leavers and would wish for these to be closed, they seemed to be more willing than early-leavers to trade these off, especially for spiritual factors.

In conclusion, there are several reasons why some students enrolled in international Christian schools exit before they graduate from high school. Top among these include finances (school fees charged relative to similar schools), unfavorable experiences by the students and or their parents while in the school, and quality of the school's academic and extracurricular programs. However, parents who are not married or highly educated; who do not engage in regular Bible study or prayer fellowships or leadership of church activities or events (in other words whose level of engagement in spiritual activities is low); who belong to non-nuclear families; who have a lower monthly income (below Ush10 million); and who primarily derive their income from "business" (in other words whose income is fluctuating) are also more likely to be early-leavers than continuers. The consistent and significant relationship between income/financial factors and the likelihood of being a continuer highlights the importance of addressing financial concerns to enhance retention of students in international Christian schools using the ACE curriculum in Uganda.

CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was motivated by the need to answer an important question, “What can international Christian schools do to retain enrolled students until they graduate from high school?” Based on the conclusions made by this study, the study makes the following recommendations to Christian schools that wish to increase retention of enrolled students until they graduate from high school.

1. Christian schools need to not only continue to focus on the spiritual development of the children (building godly character and values), but also on finding and maintaining a balance between spiritual growth, academic rigor, extracurricular activities, student/parent experience and affordability of the education they offer.
2. To enhance affordability of Christian education, Christian schools need to find alternative strategies for funding their budgets without increasing school fees in order to remain competitive in a market where competition is on the rise. One way to achieve this is through increased enrollment to take advantage of the economies of scale associated with a larger student body. Caution, however, needs to be exercised to avoid increasing class sizes to a level that pushes some students to exit early as large class sizes ranked thirteenth among the factors underlying the school exit decision. Designing and implementing flexible tuition payment plans or partial scholarships to support families facing financial difficulties while promoting long-term commitment to the school might help to abate early exits.
3. Another strategy that Christian schools could use to increase funding for their budgets without increasing school fees is by adopting a more flexible business model and admission policy that accommodates homeschoolers. About a quarter of the early leavers who participated in this study went into home schooling and continued to use the same curriculum

as the schools they exited; and financial constraints were key among the reasons for their exit. Parents who opt for homeschooling as an exit option are usually not only constrained by finances but also by lack of facilities for science projects and extracurricular activities for their children. Many of these would be willing to have their children attend schools with such facilities for a day or two in a week at an agreed fee, while homeschooling for the rest of the week. This would enable homeschoolers to benefit from what schools offer that they cannot get at home, and in return enable schools to earn more money via a blended business model than if they restrict their intake to fulltime students. Christian schools could also consider providing boarding facilities to attract students from distant places in and out of the country; which would earn the schools more money and enhance the international experience and exposure of students.

4. Two factors related to student/parent experience were listed among the top influencers of the exit decision. These include to “the teaching style did not fit my child/children’s learning style” which ranked fourth; and “insufficient social and emotional rigor”, which ranked second. This suggests that either the expectations of parents and students are not clarified at the onset during parent orientation; or that they are not being met, which can cause parents to feel like they are paying more and getting less compared to other schools. Christian schools should therefore invest more time in clarifying as well as managing not only the expectations but also the experiences of the parents and students that they enroll. This will help to minimize disgruntlement and early exit. For example, while the individualized teaching style and attention in the ACE curriculum enhance academic quality through one-on-one engagement between the student and the teacher, there may be students who learn better in a classroom setting with the teacher playing the role of an instructor or through

round table discussions. Identifying such students early enough and working together with their parents to address the challenges they face in an individualized setting may help to manage the expectations and experiences of the students to minimize early exit because of the failure of the teaching style to fit the children's learning style. Adopting a blended approach that combines individual attention and teacher-centered instruction might also be helpful.

5. The other key factors that informed the exit decision are related to academic quality (insufficient academic rigor and lack of local content curriculum) and extracurricular activities (insufficient physical, artistic and creative rigor). Academic excellence and extracurricular activities were among the top ten factors that informed the parents' school choice decisions so it is understandable why perceived failure to meet their expectations in these areas would lead to their early exit. Regarding academic rigor, some parents whose children graduated through Christian schools using the ACE curriculum felt that the curriculum was weak in science subjects at the high school level, which made it difficult for them to get admitted into Universities of their choice in the US and Europe after completing high school. To address the issue of lack of local content in the curriculum for arts subjects, such as history and geography, some schools are already borrowing from the national curriculum to add local content to these subjects, so the rest that are yet to need to follow suit. The same could be done to strengthen the ACE curriculum in the area of sciences. However, evidence of an increasing number ACE graduates enrolling and succeeding in local (Ugandan) and international universities suggests that the perception of insufficient academic rigor in science subjects is not very well informed. While the focus on sciences may be low in the early years of the ACE curriculum, it gradually increases, reaching the

summit at the intermediate and advanced certification levels of the ICCE. This is why the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) has since 2021 recognized the General and Advanced ICCE Certificates, enabling ACE students to enroll in universities in Uganda through the certificate equation. ICCE has also added physical sciences to the requirements for certification at the General Certificate to address the concerns of the parents. Christian schools need to be more intentional in investing time to clarify the expectations of the parents and students they enroll.

6. Regarding extracurricular activities, most international Christian schools do not have adequate space to provide a variety of extracurricular activities, particularly in the area of sports for the students. This is a critical area that schools must invest in, not just because parents demand it, but more so because of the way, extracurricular activities do complement academic performance in several ways, including skills development in the areas of teamwork, leadership, time management, and discipline, which can positively impact their academic performance. It also helps students develop a well-rounded personality by promoting creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, which can enhance their overall academic performance. It is therefore critical that Christian schools invest more into developing their extracurricular activities programs. However, it is equally important to find a balance between academics and extracurricular activities to ensure that academic performance is not negatively affected by strengthening the extracurricular activities program.
7. Finally, the profiling of respondents in this study identified some key attributes that distinguish those who are more likely to be early leavers than continuers, such as marital status of the parents, type of family, income level and primary income source, as well as

commitment to the Christian faith and values reflected in parents' religious engagement. Principals and school owners may need to use this information to screen new applicants for enrollment in their schools to increase the chances of enrolling more continuers than early leavers. Designing and implementing a comprehensive admission process that assesses the families' income and social stability, and commitment to the Christian faith, values and education could help to minimize the likelihood of enrolling potential early leavers while maximizing the enrollment of potential continuers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Tables accompanying Figures

Table 12b. Factors that parents consider when choosing Christian Schools for their children (figure 9)

Statement of factors considered	<i>Strongly agree (4)</i>	<i>Agree (3)</i>	<i>Disagree (2)</i>	<i>Strongly disagree (1)</i>	<i>Not Sure (0)</i>	<i>Total %</i>	<i>Rank Score</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
School teaches character and values that other schools do not	85.45	10.91	1.82	0.00	1.82	100%	6.88	1
Christ-centered environment	87.27	9.09	0.00	0.00	3.64	100%	6.84	2
Teaching style (Individualized curriculum)	74.55	23.64	0.00	0.00	1.82	100%	6.71	3
Biblical integration in all subjects	81.82	10.91	1.82	1.82	3.64	100%	6.64	4
Safe environment	61.82	38.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	6.58	5
Discipline	67.27	29.09	0.00	0.00	3.64	100%	6.48	6
School's Vision, Mission and Values	63.64	32.73	0.00	1.82	1.82	100%	6.45	7
Academic Excellence	60.00	21.82	3.64	5.45	9.09	100%	5.79	8
Student activities and extracurricular programs	52.73	30.91	1.82	9.09	5.45	100%	5.75	9
Opportunities for parental involvement	52.73	34.55	0.00	0.00	12.73	100%	5.72	10
Class Size	45.45	41.82	1.82	1.82	9.09	100%	5.69	11
The school is located close to my home or place of work	41.82	27.27	14.55	16.36	0.00	100%	5.36	12
Quality of teachers	34.55	47.27	1.82	1.82	14.55	100%	5.19	13
School has good physical facilities	34.55	43.64	5.45	1.82	14.55	100%	5.12	14
School Directors	45.45	20.00	12.73	5.45	16.36	100%	4.96	15
School Size	30.91	41.82	7.27	5.45	14.55	100%	4.89	16
Recommendations by a parent of the school, friend or relative	36.36	25.45	16.36	10.91	10.91	100%	4.83	17
Having another child in the same school.	40.00	21.82	9.09	21.82	7.27	100%	4.83	17
Technology integration in teaching and learning of all subjects	30.91	36.36	5.45	7.27	20.00	100%	4.56	19
School Principal	36.36	25.45	10.91	7.27	20.00	100%	4.56	19

Ethnically diverse environment	29.09	32.73	10.91	5.45	21.82	100%	4.40	21
School Fees compared to similar schools	20.00	30.91	14.55	10.91	23.64	100%	3.87	22
My relatives or friends children attend the school	12.73	20.00	29.09	32.73	5.45	100%	3.67	23
My child's friends attend the school	14.55	16.36	30.91	29.09	9.09	100%	3.60	24

Source SQ11, N=55 (5 Non-response)

Table 13b. Factors that parents considered when exiting initially chosen Christian School (figure 10)

Statement of factors considered	<i>Strongly agree (4)</i>	<i>Agree (3)</i>	<i>Disagree (2)</i>	<i>Strongly disagree (1)</i>	<i>Not Sure (0)</i>	Total %	Rank Score	Ranking
High Cost/School Fees compared to similar schools	22.22	18.52	25.93	29.63	3.70	100%	8.37	1
Insufficient Social and Emotional Rigor	14.81	11.11	29.63	40.74	3.70	100%	7.13	2
Insufficient Artistic and Creative Rigor	7.41	29.63	7.41	48.15	7.41	100%	6.72	3
The teaching style did not fit my child/children learning style	18.52	0.00	25.93	51.85	3.70	100%	6.58	4
Insufficient Academic Rigor,	7.41	25.93	7.41	51.85	7.41	100%	6.45	5
The curriculum lacks local content	11.11	18.52	11.11	51.85	7.41	100%	6.45	5
We moved our home or workplace to a location far away from the school	14.81	0.00	25.93	59.26	0.00	100%	6.31	7
The school had poor physical facilities	7.41	7.41	33.33	48.15	3.70	100%	6.17	8
Insufficient Ethical and Moral Rigor	11.11	7.41	14.81	59.26	7.41	100%	5.76	9
Insufficient Physical Rigor.	3.70	18.52	22.22	40.74	14.81	100%	5.76	9
My child or children did not like the school anymore.	7.41	0.00	25.93	66.67	0.00	100%	5.49	11
Poor quality of teachers and other staff	7.41	11.11	18.52	48.15	14.81	100%	5.49	11
Large class size	3.70	3.70	25.93	66.67	0.00	100%	5.35	13
Small school size/population	0.00	14.81	22.22	51.85	11.11	100%	5.21	14
Unsafe school environment	3.70	3.70	25.93	62.96	3.70	100%	5.21	14
Insufficient integration of Technology in teaching and learning different subjects	3.70	14.81	18.52	44.44	18.52	100%	5.21	14

Misunderstandings with school administration.	7.41	7.41	14.81	59.26	11.11	100%	5.21	14
My child failed to fit into the school system	3.70	3.70	18.52	74.07	0.00	100%	5.07	18
Limited opportunities for parental involvement	3.70	3.70	22.22	62.96	7.41	100%	4.94	19
Lack of shared values and beliefs	0.00	3.70	29.63	62.96	3.70	100%	4.94	19
My child's friends left the school	0.00	3.70	22.22	74.07	0.00	100%	4.80	21
My relatives or friends' children left the school	0.00	0.00	29.63	70.37	0.00	100%	4.80	21
Limited ethnic diversity	0.00	0.00	33.33	59.26	7.41	100%	4.66	23
The school was weak on discipline	0.00	0.00	25.93	70.37	3.70	100%	4.53	24

Source SQ13, N=27

Table 14b. Factors that parents consider when to retain their children at initially chosen Christian School (figure 11)

Statement of factors considered	<i>Strongly agree (4)</i>	<i>Agree (3)</i>	<i>Disagree (2)</i>	<i>Strongly disagree (1)</i>	<i>Not Sure (0)</i>	Total %	Rank Score	Ranking
Shared values and beliefs with this school	72.73	27.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	11.29	1
Sufficient Ethical and Moral Rigor	69.70	27.27	0.00	0.00	3.03	100%	10.93	2
Very strong on discipline	60.61	33.33	3.03	0.00	3.03	100%	10.56	3
Safe School Environment	54.55	42.42	0.00	0.00	3.03	100%	10.47	4
School's Vision, Mission and Values	63.64	24.24	6.06	0.00	6.06	100%	10.28	5
The school teaches character and values that other schools do not.	54.55	36.36	6.06	0.00	3.03	100%	10.28	5
Opportunities for parental involvement	48.48	42.42	6.06	0.00	3.03	100%	10.1	7
The teaching style fits my child/ children's learning style	48.48	33.33	3.03	6.06	9.09	100%	9.27	8
Class Size	30.30	54.55	6.06	0.00	9.09	100%	9.00	9
My child fits better in this type of school/system	48.48	30.30	3.03	6.06	12.12	100%	9.00	9
Sufficient Social and Emotional Rigor	42.42	39.39	0.00	3.03	15.15	100%	8.81	11
Sufficient Artistic and Creative Rigor	33.33	42.42	9.09	3.03	12.12	100%	8.54	12

This type of school provides education that is tailored to my child or children's needs and interests	39.39	33.33	6.06	6.06	15.15	100%	8.36	13
The school location is close to my home or place of work	33.33	27.27	21.21	18.18	0.00	100%	8.36	13
I have another child or children in the same school	36.36	27.27	15.15	12.12	9.09	100%	8.17	15
Very good quality of teachers and other staff	36.36	33.33	9.09	3.03	18.18	100%	8.08	16
Sufficient integration of Technology in teaching and learning of different subjects	33.33	36.36	9.09	3.03	18.18	100%	7.99	17
My child or children always wanted to go to this school	39.39	15.15	18.18	18.18	9.09	100%	7.80	18
Very good physical facilities	27.27	39.39	9.09	9.09	15.15	100%	7.71	19
Ethnically diverse environment	39.39	30.30	0.00	6.06	24.24	100%	7.71	19
School Directors	45.45	15.15	12.12	3.03	24.24	100%	7.71	19
Sufficient Physical Rigor	27.27	42.42	3.03	9.09	18.18	100%	7.62	22
Sufficient Academic Rigor	36.36	30.30	3.03	6.06	24.24	100%	7.53	23
School Size	18.18	45.45	15.15	6.06	15.15	100%	7.44	24
Recommendations of a parent, friend or relative	24.24	27.27	24.24	12.12	12.12	100%	7.25	25
The Principal	27.27	27.27	15.15	12.12	18.18	100%	7.07	26
My child's friends attend the school,	18.18	9.09	36.36	27.27	9.09	100%	6.06	27
Low/affordable Cost/Fees compared to other options	15.15	27.27	15.15	21.21	21.21	100%	5.88	28
Sufficient local content in the school curriculum	6.06	33.33	18.18	18.18	24.24	100%	5.42	29
My relatives or friends' children attend the school	6.06	12.12	33.33	33.33	15.15	100%	4.87	30

Source SQ17, N=33

Appendix B: Online Data Gathering Instruments (Letter to Schools, Pre-survey Introduction, and Informed Consent Form)

Letter to Schools requesting for contact information of potential respondents

Dear School Principal/Director:

I hope this finds you well. My name is Dick Sserunkuuma. I am a Christian educator working with Chum International School and concurrently pursuing the M.A. degree in Organizational Leadership and Management (MAOL) at UCU. I am writing to inform you about a study I am undertaking in fulfillment of the requirements for the MAOL degree; but more importantly, to understand what informs parents' decisions when choosing and exiting Christian schools for their children. As a Proprietor/Principal of a Christian school, I am sure you understand that the private, open-market and increasingly competitive nature of Christian education in Uganda makes the sustainability of our schools directly tied to enrollment and retention of students to provide stability for the budget that we need to support the academic, social and co-curricular programs of our schools. Our ability as Christian educators to enroll and retain students largely depends on our awareness of parents' concerns and preferences regarding Christian education in Uganda, as well as our ability and readiness to respond to these by providing an education that meets their demands. The purpose of this study is to create that awareness and to initiate dialogue among Christian educators on how best to foster our ability and readiness to meet the needs of our clients as we fulfill our collective and individual mandates.

The reason I am writing to you is to seek your participation in this study by providing me with the names and contact information of parents (i) who at one time enrolled their children in your school but withdrew them before they completed high school; (ii) those who enrolled and kept their children in your school until they graduated from high school; (iii) as well as those whose children are yet to graduate from high school but have stayed with your school long enough to convince you that they will most likely stay up to the end. The information you provide will be used for the sole purpose of contacting these parents to seek their participation in this study to share their perspectives on school choice and exit decision-making. The study is beneficial to parents because it provides a platform for bringing their voices to the fore in shaping the future of Christian education in Uganda. It is also beneficial to the participating schools because the findings will be used to provide feedback that is both general and specific to each participating school; which I believe schools will find useful for planning what they need to do to increase their enrollment and retention of students.

Although the main reason I am undertaking this study is to gather information to support school improvement among Christian schools in Uganda, it also serves an academic purpose that is time bound. That is why I request that if you are interested in participating in this study, please get back to me with the names and contact information of parents in the three categories described above by Friday May 19, 2023. I look forward to hearing from you soon, and to starting a long working relationship that is mutually beneficial to both our schools.

Sincerely,

Professor Dick Sserunkuuma
Director, Chum International School.

Pre-survey Introduction

Dear Parent:

I hope this finds you well. My name is Dick Sserunkuuma. I am a Christian educator currently pursuing the M.A. degree in Organizational Leadership and Management at UCU. I am reaching out to you as part of a study I am conducting on the factors that inform parents' decisions when choosing and exiting Christian schools for their children. As a parent, I am sure you understand that the education of our children is one of the most important aspects of their lives, and as such, we need to make informed decisions to ensure that they receive the best possible education.

I am conducting this study to learn from your experiences as a parent who has either enrolled your child in a Christian school or has withdrawn your child from one. Your thoughts and opinions are valuable, and I believe that the information you provide will help to create awareness among Christian educators concerning parents' concerns and preferences regarding Christian education; and to better understand how best to respond to those concerns and provide the education that meets the parents' and children's preferences.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and all information provided will be kept confidential. Your identity will not be revealed and your responses will not be identified with you as an individual while sharing the study findings. The information collected will be used for research purposes only.

I would be grateful if you could spare some time to participate in this study. Your contribution would be greatly appreciated and will help to shape the future of Christian education in Uganda. It will take you about 30-40 minutes to answer questions related to this study; and once again your participation is completely voluntary. If you are willing to participate, please copy this link (<https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/u0sIRwvs>) into google and proceed to complete the questionnaire. Remember to click (Submit) at the end of the questionnaire when you are done.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Shalom!

Informed Consent Form

Before you start, please read this.

This questionnaire is part of a study undertaken in fulfillment of the requirements for the M. A. in Organizational Leadership and Management course at the Uganda Christian University (UCU). The purpose of this study is to understand how parents make school-choice decisions for their children; and why some parents keep their children in the initially chosen school until they complete high school while others exit to join other schools before completing high school. The study focuses on Christian international schools because of their unique contribution to nation-building through the teaching of academic subjects from a Christian perspective and worldview, by integrating God's Word into the different subjects in order to instill Christian values and nurture godly character in students. This is important because while academic ability may get students to the top both in school and after school life, it takes character to keep them there (John Wooden).

You have been selected to participate in this study because of your experience with Christian education and Christian international schools in Uganda; and you are one of more than 100 parents participating in the study. Your participation is voluntary yet critical for bringing parents' voices to the fore in shaping the future of Christian education in Uganda. The survival of Christian education in this country depends to a large degree on the awareness of parents' concerns and preferences by Christian educators; and on their readiness to respond to these concerns and preferences in order to provide the education that meets the parents' preferences. Your voice is important in raising this awareness among Christian educators about the things that matter the most to you as a parent; and this study provides a platform for you to do exactly that.

You don't face any risk in participating in this study because your responses will be held with utmost confidentiality. You will only be identified with a pseudonym and the study results will be published without revealing the identity of the respondents or identifying individuals with their opinions. Please answer the questions based on what you really know or feel; and be as truthful as you can. There are no right and wrong answers. After reading every question, please choose the answer that best describes your opinion from among the options provided or write your best answer in the space provided. If any question is not clear to you, please read it again and if you still have a challenge, ask the survey administrator via WhatsApp or text message to 0708754485. Thank you for taking the time to read this statement.

Before you proceed, **PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR WILLINGNESS TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.**

Yes I confirm No I will not be able *(Insert ✓ in the right box)*

Thank you very much for your help and time. Your participation in this important research is highly appreciated.

Please begin.

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL CHOICE, EXIT AND CONTINUITY STUDY

1. Questionnaire No _____ Date completed _____

2. Gender: Male Female (Insert ✓ in the right box)

3. Home location: Division Parish LC1

4. Age group category (Insert ✓ in the right box)

18 or below	19-35	36-50	51-60	Above 60
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Marital status: (Insert ✓ in the right box)

Single	Married	Divorced	Separated	Widowed	Cohabiting
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Highest level of completed education: (Insert ✓ in the right box)

Never attended school	Attended but did not complete any grades	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary, e.g., University or Technical Institutes	Post-graduate (master or Ph.D)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Religious affiliation: (Insert ✓ in the right box)

Catholic	Protestant/Anglican	Pentecostal	S.D.A	Orthodox	Muslim	Others (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8 (a) How many children (0 -18 years) are there in your family? _____

8 (b). Do you have a child or children currently in school?

Yes No

8 (c) How many of your children are currently enrolled in school? _____

10. Have any of your children ever enrolled in a Christian International School before?

Yes No

11. If Yes to question 10 above, please share more about the Christian International School where your child or children are currently or were previously enrolled by selecting one of the five options in the table below to indicate whether you agree or disagree that you considered the factors in the table below when choosing a Christian international school for your child or children.

<i>Select one of the five options to indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree that you considered these factors when choosing a Christian International School for your child or children (Insert ✓ in the right box)</i>						
I considered this factor when choosing a <u>Christian International School</u> for my child or children		strongly disagree	disagree	not sure	agree	strongly agree
1	The school is located close to my home or place of work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	My child's friends attend the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	My relatives or friends' children attend the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4	Academic Excellence					
5	Student activities and extra-curricular programs					
6	The teaching style (individual attention to children)					
7	The Christ-centered environment					
8	Biblical integration in all subjects					
9	Technology integration in teaching and learning of different subjects					
10	Quality of teachers					
11	School's Vision, Mission and Values					
12	The school has good physical facilities					
13	Discipline					
14	The school teaches character and values that other schools do not					
15	Cost/School Fees compared to similar schools					
16	Class Size					
17	School Size					
18	Safe environment					
19	Ethnically diverse environment					
20	Opportunities for parental involvement					
21	I have another child in the same school					
22	I was unhappy with previous school					
23	Recommendations of a parent, friend or relative					
24	The Principal					
25	The Directors					
26	Other factor (<i>specify indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree</i>) _____)					

12. If any of your child or children are currently or were at any one time enrolled in a Christian International School, did you move them from the Christian school you had initially chosen to another school or home school before they completed high school (Grade 12)?

Yes No (If No, Skip to Question 17) (IF YES, ANSWER QUESTIONS 13 TO 16 BUT SKIP QUESTION 17 AND ANSWER QUESTIONS 18 UP TO THE END)

13. If Yes to question 12 above, please share with me the reasons that compelled you to move your child or children from the initially chosen Christian International School before they completed high school.

<p>Select one of the five options to indicate whether you "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Not sure", "Agree" or "Strongly agree" that the reasons listed below compelled you to move your child or children from the initially chosen Christian International School to another school or to a home school. (Insert ✓ in the right box)</p>		strongly disagree	disagree	not sure	agree	strongly agree
	This particular reason was behind my decision to move my child or children from a <u>Christian International School</u> to another school or to a home school.					
1	We moved our home or workplace to a location far away from the school					
2	My child's friends left the school					
3	My relatives or friends' children left the school					
4	My child or children did not like the school anymore					
5	Insufficient Academic Rigor: (<i>Academic rigor refers to the level of difficulty and the thoroughness of academic work, which is designed to challenge and stimulate the intellectual abilities of students.</i>)					
6	Insufficient Physical Rigor: (<i>Limited opportunities for students to engage in physical activities and sports that promote physical fitness, wellness, and teamwork, as well as experiences that harden them for the challenging after school life</i>)					
7	Insufficient Social and Emotional Rigor: (<i>Lack of a school culture that supports the social and emotional well-being of students through programs that promote empathy, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and positive relationships</i>)					
8	Insufficient Artistic and Creative Rigor: (<i>Lack of programs that promote creativity and artistic expression, such as music, drama, dance, and visual arts</i>)					
9.	Insufficient Ethical and Moral Rigor: (<i>Weakness in fostering a culture of integrity, honesty, and respect for others, and promoting ethical behavior and responsible citizenship.</i>)					
10	Insufficient integration of Technology in teaching and learning of different subjects					
11	Curriculum lacks local content					
12	The teaching style (individual attention to children) did not fit my child/children learning style					
13	Poor quality of teachers and other staff					
14	The school had poor physical facilities					
17	The school was weak on discipline					
18	High Cost/School Fees compared to similar schools					

19	Large class size (high student to teacher ratio)					
20	Small school size/population hindering children from building large social networks and sufficient social capital for after school life					
21	Unsafe school environment					
22	Limited ethnic diversity					
23	Limited opportunities for parental involvement					
24	Misunderstandings with school administration					
25	My child failed to fit in the school system					
26	Lack of shared values and beliefs					
27	Other reason (<i>specify indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree</i>)					

14. For the child or children you moved from the initially chosen Christian International School to another school or home school before they completed high school, please list the names of the children you moved in the table below (**use nicknames or other identifier if you are not okay with identifying them by real name**) and indicate the year and grade when they enrolled at the initially chosen Christian International School, year and grade when they exited the Christian International School, the type of school they exited to, and number of years spent at the school they exited to.

Name of child moved from the initially chosen <u>Christian International School</u> to another school or home school	Year when they enrolled at the initially chosen <u>Christian International School</u>	Grade when they enrolled at the initially chosen <u>Christian International School</u>	Year when they exited the initially chosen <u>Christian International School</u>	Grade when they exited the initially chosen <u>Christian International School</u>	Type of school they exited to (<i>#Check below table for clarification on types of schools</i>) 1=National School; 2=Secular International School; 3=Christian International School; 4=Home School; 5=Other type of school (specify))	Number of years spent at the school they exited to.

#•National School (national schools follow the national education curriculum which is heavy on academic content and low on skills and values)

•Secular International School (these schools also provide a more traditional academic environment with courses in a variety of subject areas and skill building but are low on values; mostly follow the curriculum of the US or the UK or other international curriculums)

•Christian International School (these schools provide a more faith-based curriculum, with scripture interwoven in the different subject areas, with a strong emphasis on biblical values and the importance of faith in God)

15. Tell me more about the reasons you considered when choosing the type of school to move your child or children to (exit option) when they exited the initially chosen Christian International School

<p><i>Select one of the five options to indicate whether you "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Not sure", "Agree" or "Strongly agree" that the reasons listed below persuaded you to choose the exit option that you took when you decided to move your child or children from the initially chosen Christian International school (Insert ✓ in the right box)</i></p>		strongly disagree	disagree	not sure	agree	strongly agree
	This particular reason was behind my choice for the exit option I took when I moved my child or children from the initially chosen <u>Christian International School</u> to another school					
1	The new school location is close to my home or place of work					
2	My child's friends attend the new school					
3	My relatives or friends' children attend the new school					
4	My child or children always wanted to go to the new school					
5	Sufficient Academic Rigor: <i>(Academic rigor refers to the level of difficulty and the thoroughness of academic work, which is designed to challenge and stimulate the intellectual abilities of students).</i>					
6	Sufficient Physical Rigor: <i>(The school provides opportunities for students to engage in physical activities and sports that promote physical fitness, wellness, and teamwork, as well as experiences that harden them for the challenging after school life)</i>					
7	Sufficient Social and Emotional Rigor: <i>(The school has culture that supports the social and emotional well-being of students through programs that promote empathy, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and positive relationships)</i>					
8	Sufficient Artistic and Creative Rigor: <i>(The school offers programs that promote creativity and artistic expression, such as music, drama, dance, and visual arts)</i>					
9	Sufficient Ethical and Moral Rigor: <i>(The school fosters a culture of integrity, honesty, and respect for others, and promoting ethical behavior and responsible citizenship).</i>					
10	Sufficient integration of Technology in teaching and learning of different subjects					
11	Sufficient local content in school curriculum					
12	The teaching style fits my child/children learning style					
13	My child fits better in this type of school/system					
14	This type of school provides education that is tailored to my child or children's needs and interests					

15	Shared values and beliefs with this school type					
16	School's Vision, Mission and Values					
17	The school teaches character and values that other schools do not					
18	Very good quality of teachers and other staff					
19	Very good physical facilities					
20	Very strong on discipline					
21	Low/affordable Cost/Fees compared to other option					
22	Small class size (low student to teacher ratio)					
23	Large school/population enabling children to build network and sufficient social capital for after school life					
24	Safe environment					
25	Ethnically diverse environment					
26	Opportunities for parental involvement					
27	I have another child in the same school					
28	Recommendations of a parent, friend or relative					
29	The Principal					
30	The Directors					
31	Other reason (<i>specify indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree</i> _____)					

16. For the child or children you moved from the initially chosen Christian International School to either **(i) National School, (ii) Secular International School or (iii) Home School**; list at least three things that would need to change for you to consider re-enrolling your child or children in a Christian International School

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

17. If you enrolled any of your child or children in a Christian International School and did not move them from the initially chosen Christian school to another school or home school until they completed high school (Grade 12) OR if you have retained your child or children at the initially chosen Christian International School for the past 5 to 10 years and do not plan to move them to another school or home school until they complete high school (Grade 12), please share with me your reasons for choosing to retain your child or children at the initially chosen Christian International School until they complete high school.

<i>Select one of the options to indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree that the reasons listed below convicted you to retain your child or children at the initially chosen Christian International School until your child or children complete high school (Insert ✓ in the right box)</i>		strongly disagree	disagree	not sure	agree	strongly agree
This particular reason convicted me to retain my child or children at the initially chosen Christian International School until your child or children complete high school						
1	The school location is close to my home or place of work					
2	My child's friends attend the school					
3	My relatives or friends' children attend the school					
4	My child or children always wanted to go to this school					
5	Sufficient Academic Rigor: <i>(Academic rigor refers to the level of difficulty and the thoroughness of academic work, which is designed to challenge and stimulate the intellectual abilities of students).</i>					
6	Sufficient Physical Rigor: <i>(The school provides opportunities for students to engage in physical activities and sports that promote physical fitness, wellness, and teamwork, as well as experiences that harden them for the challenging after school life)</i>					
7	Sufficient Social and Emotional Rigor: <i>(The school has culture that supports the social and emotional well-being of students through programs that promote empathy, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and positive relationships)</i>					
8	Sufficient Artistic and Creative Rigor: <i>(The school offers programs that promote creativity and artistic expression, such as music, drama, dance, and visual arts)</i>					
9	Sufficient Ethical and Moral Rigor: <i>(The school fosters a culture of integrity, honesty, and respect for others, and promoting ethical behavior and responsible citizenship).</i>					
10	Sufficient integration of Technology in teaching and learning of different subjects					
11	Sufficient local content in school curriculum					
12	The teaching style fits my child/children learning style					
13	My child fits better in this type of school					

14	This type of school provides education that is tailored to my child or children's needs and interests					
15	Shared values and beliefs with this school					
16	School's Vision, Mission and Values					
17	The school teaches character and values that other schools do not					
18	Very good quality of teachers and other staff					
19	Very good physical facilities					
20	The school is very strong on discipline					
21	Low/affordable Cost/Fees compared to other school					
22	Class Size					
23	School Size					
24	Safe school environment					
25	Ethnically diverse environment					
26	Opportunities for parental involvement					
27	I have another child or children in the same school					
28	Recommendations of a parent, friend or relative					
29	The Principal					
30	The Directors					
31	Other reason (<i>specify indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree</i> _____)					

18. Is there anything more that you would like to share regarding your experience with Christian education or Christian schools in Uganda?

Yes No

19. If Yes to question 18 above, please record the additional information that you want to share in the space below

20. In the last two weeks, how often have you been involved in a Church activity? (Insert ✓ in the right box)

No times	One time	Two times	Three times	Four times or more

21. In the last week, how often would you say you have engaged in the following? (Insert ✓ in the right box)

Activity	Nearly everyd	Several times	Once	Not at all
Read the Bible on my own				
Engaged in personal prayer				
Met with a small group for prayer or Bible stu				
Listened to a Christian radio or TV program				
Led a group activity or event connected with the Church				

22. Type of the family: (Insert ✓ in the right box)

Nuclear family (Father and Mother living together with their children)	Single-parent family (One parent living together with the child or children)	Step family (family that is formed on the remarriage of a divorced or widowed person and that includes a child or children)	Guardianship family (family where child or children live with a person who is not their biological parent).

23. Main source of family income/livelihood? (Insert ✓ in the right box)

Farming	Business	Salaried Employment	Wage Employment	Others (specify)

24. How much in Uganda Shillings does the family receive per month from the main source of income in question 14 above? (Insert ✓ in the right box)

Less than Ush3,700,000	Ush3,700,000 to Ush4,995,000	Ush5,000,000 to Ush7,499,500	Ush7,500,000 to Ush9,999,500	Ush10,000,000 to Ush15,000,000	More than Ush15,000,000

Finally, PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOLLOW-UP PHYSICAL OR VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TO CLARIFY ANY ASPECTS OF THIS SURVEY AND SHARE MORE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN UGANDA. (Insert ✓ in the right box)

Yes, I confirm

Please share with me the phone number where you can be reached to schedule the personal interview: _____

No, I will not be able

Thank you so much for your time

Appendix D: Personal Interview Introduction and Questions

Pre-Interview Introduction

My name is Dick Sserunkuuma. I am a Christian educator and a student of Organizational Leadership and Management Master of Arts degree course at the Uganda Christian University (UCU). Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to answer questions related to my research. My research interest is in parent decision making regarding school choice; and my focus is on Christian schools because I believe they can make a significant contribution to nation-building through instilling Christian values and nurturing godly character in students at a time such as this when we rank very low as a nation along the character dimension.

I would like to record this interview and take notes for my own research purposes and will keep your reflections confidential. I request that you agree to a follow-up phone call if I need to clarify any aspects of our interview today. You will be given a pseudonym to protect your privacy and ensure that your identity remains remain anonymous. This recording will be erased once I make a transcript and complete the requirements for my M.A. degree program. Several parents with children enrolled in different Christian schools in Uganda are participating in this study. Your participation is voluntary and optional yet critical for bringing parents' voices to the fore in shaping the future of Christian education in Uganda. The results will benefit all stakeholders in the education sector, especially Christian educators by raising their awareness of parents' concerns and preferences regarding Christian education; and helping them better understand how to respond to those concerns and provide the education that meets the parents' and children's preferences. There are no risks involved in participating in this study.

At the end of the online survey questionnaire you helped me to complete, you expressed your willingness to participate in a personal interview and shared with me your number to help in scheduling this interview. Thank you for completing the questionnaire and once again for accepting to meet me today. Before we proceed, I want to reconfirm your willingness to participate in this interview. Would you like to proceed? If yes, I begin the interview with a warn up question about the family or something else of interest to the respondent; otherwise endeavor to re-schedule the interview to a more appropriate time or call it off.

Interview Questions

Warm-up: How is your family? How many children and how has it been like raising them in these challenging times?

1. How many of your children are currently enrolled in school (Kindergarten to high school)?
2. Have you ever enrolled any of your children in a Christian International School? Probe: All of them or some of them? and if some of them how did you choose who to enroll in a Christian School?
3. Why a Christian school?
4. What factors did you consider when choosing the particular Christian school among the many? Probe: Were these factors given equal weight?
5. Did the school meet your expectations or were you somewhat disappointed? Probe: Tell me more about your experience
6. For the child or children currently or at one time enrolled in a Christian International School, did you move them from the Christian school you had initially chosen to another school or home school before they completed high school (Grade 12)? Probe: What compelled you to move them?
7. [*If you did not move your child or children from the initially chosen Christian school to another school until they completed high school (Grade 12) OR if you have retained your child or children at the initially chosen Christian International School for the past 5 to 10 years and do not plan to move them until they complete high school*], **what convicted you to commit to this school until your children complete high school?** Probe: To what extent has this school met your expectations?
8. For the child or children that you moved from the Christian school you had initially chosen, to what type of school did you take them? Probe: What informed your choice of this exit option? Did the exit option meet your expectations? Is the child or are the children still going to the same school they moved to when they exited your initially chosen Christian school?
9. [For the child or children moved from the initially chosen Christian International School to either (i) National School, (ii) Secular International School or (iii) Home School] is there a possibility of re-enrolling them in a Christian International School in the future? Probe: Why or Why not? What would need to change for you to re-consider enrolling your child or children in a Christian International School in the future?

10. Is there anything more that you would like to share regarding your experience with Christian education or Christian schools in Uganda or anything we have not touched that you want to add?

Thank you so much for your time