

Review

The advent of universal primary education (UPE) in Uganda: challenges and possible solutions

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The starting of universal primary education (UPE) in Uganda was not a smooth affair. There was politicization of primary education to the extent that politicians had taken center-stage in policy formulation and monitoring. The research suggested employment of technical personnel in policy matters. Another issue was the high attrition rate at primary level. It was recommended that government should put in place measures to effect universal primary completion. The quality of education had remained low, because of the high pupil to teacher ratio and low teachers' morale. In that respect, government should motivate the teachers. Corruption was a big challenge in Uganda and funds were embezzled. Government should hold all civil servants involved accountable at all levels. Whereas there was UPE, a number of parents could not afford it because of poverty. Government should intensify campaigns to increase household incomes and transform society from a peasantry economy to a middle-class economy. In Uganda, there was lack of a relevant curriculum to make the school product self-reliant. This study suggested 8 years of skill-based primary education. Methodology applied in this study is non-empirical based on the concept critical analysis of issues.

Key words: Universal Primary Education, peasantry economy, middle-class economy, attrition rate.



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INTRODUCTION

The development of any country is directly proportional to the level of development of its education system (Hanushek, 1997). A lot depends on how much attention the country pays to education. The major purpose of education is to educate all citizens and give everyone adequate opportunity to succeed in life (Hanushek, 1997). It is important to note that through knowledge and skills, all individuals can achieve greatness (Mazurek et al., 2000). It is generally agreed that the more knowledge and skills a person acquires, the better are the chances of achieving informed mobility (Rost, 1993). There is hardly any factor in society that is as formidable as education. Aristotle, in reference to society, once said that the educated differ from the uneducated, as much as the living differs from the dead (Di Leo, 2007). Education deals with knowledge that is recognizably worthwhile and capable of achieving a voluntary and committed response and it leads to new mental perspectives (Farrant, 1980).

Arguably, investment in education benefits the individual, society and the world as a whole. For the individuals and nations, education is a key to the development of dynamic, globally competitive economies. It is also fundamental for the construction of democratic societies (Juuko and Kabonesa, 2007). Farrant (1980) opines that education is society's cultural reproductive system by which society reproduces itself, through passing on its main characteristics to the next generation.

The importance of primary education in Uganda cannot be underscored. Moreover, since a big number of pupils in Uganda drop out of school at this stage, primary school education is the only basic education that such Ugandans can, in most cases, ever be exposed to. Basic education means the minimum package of learning, which every individual must receive to live as a good and useful citizen in society (Education Policy Review Commission Report, 1989). Besides it being foundational to post-

primary education, primary education plays a major role in the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy, communication skills and a number of other skills that are important for social development. Furthermore, primary education helps the children to gain and maintain sound mental and physical health. It is also helpful as it instills values of living and working cooperatively with others, and ensures cultural, moral and spiritual values of life.

GOVERNANCE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN UGANDA

Brief history

It should be noted that school education was introduced in Uganda by missionaries from Europe in the late nineteenth century, mainly by the Church Missionary Society, the White Fathers, the Mill Hill Fathers, and the Comboni Missionaries (Aguti, 2002; Ssekamwa, 1994). They first educated the sons and daughters of chiefs, who would later work as clerks and other civil servants. Whereas, Aguti (2002) insinuates that the purpose of those missionaries was not to educate all, but for children of chiefs; the Education Policy Review Commission Report (1989), in contradistinction, shows that there were some mission schools which provided equal opportunity to children from all quarters of society. This point is stressed by Ssekamwa (1994) who posits that in an effort to eradicate illiteracy, missionaries started church schools wherever they established a mission or in its outstations. This is further emphasized by the Uganda Episcopal Conference Education Policy (1997), which reiterates that in Uganda, formal school education was initiated by religious denominations to eradicate ignorance from society.

It is those church schools that later evolved into the present church-founded primary schools. As stressed by the Education Policy Review Report (1989), most of the children attended small rural schools, called Church Schools, unsupported by government. In support to the aforementioned argument, Ssekamwa (1994) notes that “unfortunately, there was little financial support by the colonial government for the missions in their educational work” (p. 302). However, the colonial government was not fully detached from the financial management of the schools. The same author, in this regard, furthermore observes that “throughout the colonial era, missionaries controlled the system of education but governments were mainly concerned with grants to aid running the mission schools” (p. 129).

There were efforts by the colonial government in Uganda to establish rules and procedures of educating the Ugandans right from the missionary days. The British Colonial Policy in 1923 advised the British colonial administrators in Uganda to provide education for the

African child. Soon after, the American sponsored Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924-1925 was set up to assess the development of education in Uganda, where the Department of Education was established under the direction of Eric Hussey (Ssekamwa, 1994). Thereafter, better schools were built, teacher training and grading were introduced and grants from government were formalized. However, the significant state financing of education, according to Magara (2009), started in 1940 where the Thomas Education Committee recommended the involvement of governments in grant-aiding schools.

In 1937, the De La Warr Commission recommended Makerere to be developed as a regional university college, serving the British East African territory. The interest of government then was to get so many African workers. That was why the Binns Commission of 1951 encouraged rapid growth of education in Uganda (Education Policy Review Commission Report, 1989). However, that type of education was not favorable to national development. Ssekamwa (1994) intimates that “the main aim was to produce white-collar workers, whose pre-occupation was to seek already created jobs, instead of creating new jobs” (p. 307). However, in 1953, the Report on African Education in Uganda, drawn up by a committee chaired by Bernard de Bunsen, gave emphasis to Africanization of education and the training of high level personnel needed for the country's economic development (Education Policy Review Commission Report, 1989).

In 1963, the Uganda Government appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of E. B. Castle and the commission proposed the merging of primary and junior secondary schools. At primary level, it placed emphasis, not only on quantitative expansion, but also on quality. The Castle Commission also underlined the need for expanding girls' education. The government instituted another commission in 1977, under the chairmanship of Senteza Kajubi, to review the education system in Uganda. But, the report of the said Kajubi Commission was not published, and its recommendations were not implemented because of the liberation war of 1978-1979. Consequently, since independence, the structure of education in Uganda has been according to the Castle Commission Report on Education in Uganda of 1963, with a few policy reforms. Therefore, as Juuko and Kabonesa (2007) argue, the present structure of education in Uganda has been in existence since missionary days, but particularly since 1965, following the recommendation of the said Castle Education Commission Report on Education. This reflects how outdated the system is, thus crying for revision and updating.

The above assertion, notwithstanding, many Ugandans remained non-literate, with the literacy level standing at 65% in the mid-1990s (Education Policy Review Commission Report, 1989). With the increased need for

Table 1. Primary school enrollment from 1964 to 2012.

1964	1968	1974	1978	1984	1988	1994	1998	2004	2008	2012
526	642	878	1.204	1.930	2.417	2.305	5.806	7.377	7.969	8.317

Source: Education Management Information System 1964-2012.

the children to access education, the private sector became another player around 1990s. The Four-Year Rehabilitation and Development Plan of 1988-1991 aimed at restructuring the curriculum, restoration of educational facilities and lay foundation to cater for the growing population.

BACKGROUND TO STARTING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

The current trends

It is important, therefore, to examine the factors of teacher education in Uganda, which is mandated to prepare teachers for educating children in primary schools. Teachers are the backbone of every education system. The training of teachers has been complemented by continuous teacher development programs. The Ministry of Education and Sports has reviewed the Primary Teacher Education Certificate program, which now emphasizes pedagogy to enhance teachers' competences and deliver thematic curriculum at lower and upper primary. Consequently, the new Primary Teacher Education Certificate curriculum responds to the key cross-cutting issues that include HIV/AIDS, gender, special needs education and psychosocial education.

However, the biggest concern raised by teachers is the remuneration of teachers, an issue that will be expounded on in the section of challenges. According to the Voice of the Teachers of June 2012, without adequate pay, no teacher, no matter how gifted, experienced or well trained, can truly provide quality education without equitable remuneration. According to the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2007-2015, the Uganda Government intends to alleviate all the inefficiencies in primary teacher education. For that purpose, the policy objectives enshrined in the plan include increasing and improving equitable access to quality education, improving the quality and relevance of primary education, and improving the effectiveness and efficiency in delivery of primary education. The Government plans to make primary education relevant by ensuring that all children access school, learn the basics of literacy and numeracy and life skills. The Ministry of Education and Sports aims to make the curriculum feasible and practical.

The aforesaid notwithstanding, the fact is that since

Uganda's Independence, the state has been in control of education system, according to the recommendations of the Castle Report (1963). Consequently, the schools are now open to all children, regardless of their religion and race. There has been also a steady Africanization of the educational syllabus, and a discouragement of disunity (Ssekamwa, 1994). That has been a positive move towards national unity.

A significant landmark in the evolution of primary education in Uganda is the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. President Museveni launched the UPE policy in accordance with the Government White Paper of 1992. Under this policy, government was to provide "free" education to a maximum of four children from each family (Aguti, 2002). This later changed: because the President directed that all children of school going age should benefit from UPE (Olupot, 2002). Introduction of UPE in Uganda coincided with many other countries introducing similar projects. Grogan (2008) observes that UPE was adopted by Malawi in 1994 and by Lesotho in 2000, and the abolition of school fees was effected in Tanzania in 2000 and in Cameroon, Burundi, Ghana, Rwanda and Kenya concurrently in 2003.

There has been an increase in pupil enrollment since 1964 when the Uganda Government attempted to implement the recommendations of the Castle Commission Report (1963) which stated that girls also be accorded equal chances to education. Furthermore, the population increased and consequently the enrollment also increased. However, there was an exponential increase in the enrollment starting with 1994 to 2004 as illustrated in Table 1. It is during that period that local Governments intensified the program of sensitizing parents to take their children to school. There was also introduction of UPE in 1997. Correspondingly, more schools were built from 1997 to accommodate the surging numbers of pupils (Table 2).

The civil service structure in Uganda has been transformed from following a highly centralized traditional civil service model to a decentralized structure, with most of the authority and resources being devolved to the districts. According to SACMEQ (1995 – 2012), this provides for a more accountable and responsive provision of basic services to the population including education. The management and provision of basic education is now, largely, in the hands of the district administrations, while the central government remains

Table 2. Number of primary schools from 1967 to 2011.

1967	1977	1987	1997	2007	2011
2551	3384	7627	8600	18583	22200

Source: Education Management Information System 1964 – 2012.

responsible for policy control and maintenance of standards through control of teacher education, curriculum and examinations.

The structure of Uganda Primary Education is seven years, after which the pupil sits for Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) for admission to lower secondary school known as ordinary level, or to a trade school (technical or agricultural). According to Grogan (2008), the introduction of UPE raised hope that the state was stressing education as a top priority for securing sustainable socio-economic development. The government has, further, developed a philosophy of education for primary education, enshrined in the aims and objectives espoused in Education Policy Commission Review Report (1989). According to the Report, the specific aims and objectives of primary education in Uganda are to enable individual children to acquire basic literacy, numeracy and communication skills, to develop and maintain mental and physical health. Furthermore, the aims and objectives are to instill the social, cultural and spiritual values of life, to appreciate and protect the environment, to develop a sense of patriotism so as to understand the rights and civic matters, and to develop adequate skills for making a living.

The seven year primary education structure, however, has remained as opposed to the eight or nine years recommended by the Education Policy Review Commission Report (1989). As earlier said, there was devolution of power to the districts. Aguti (2002), furthermore, contends that the governance of primary education in Uganda is still a top-down structure initiated by the central government and implemented by local governments and schools. The central government is represented by the Commissioner for Pre-primary and Primary Education who is answerable to the Director of Education (SACMEQ, 2012).

At the district level, there is a District Service Commission which is the body in charge of managing human resource recruitment in the district. When considering recruitment of staff by the District Service Commission, the guidelines provided by education Service Commission are followed. The local Government coordinates with the central government in the management of primary schools. The Ministry of Education and Sports, in this regard, gives technical support for purposes of ensuring implementation of national policies and adherence to performance standards. As a result, the Ministry of Education and

Sports inspects and monitors activities at the district level. The local government does the inspection and monitoring at the school level. Besides, the ministry assists the local government by providing technical education officers.

The law of Uganda provides that the education officers appointed to act as district inspectors of schools and district education officers shall be under the direction of the Director of Education. The officers perform their roles at the local level. For example, a district inspector of schools is mandated at any time to enter into any school in the district under his jurisdiction and inspect and provide a report to the permanent secretary or other relevant officers with respect to the school buildings and standard of teaching. The inspector may order the auditing of the school accounts.

The District Council's Standing Committee Responsible for Education is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the role of all educational services decentralized in a district, division or sub-county. It is supposed to make part of the comprehensive and integrated development plan of the district. The Ministry of Education and Sports, through the District Education Office is mandated to put in place a School Management Committee. That committee comprises twelve members, six, including chairperson, at least two of whom are women, are nominated by the foundation body, one local government representative nominated by the district council standing committee responsible for education. More members are: one representative of local council executive committee, one person elected by sub-county or division or municipal council, one representative of parents, one representative of staff, and one representative of former students. The School Management Committee manages the school in accordance with the Education Act of 2008 and is subject to regulations and directions which may be given under the Act by the Ministry of Education and Sports on matters of general policy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Achievements of Universal Primary Education in Uganda

In order to contextualize the issues properly, the results will mainly tackle the achievements of UPE, which has

Table 3. Number of people trained by TDMS.

Staff category	Numbers trained
Untrained teachers upgrading to Grade III	8,685
Head teachers	7,414
Principals of Core PTCs	18
Deputy Principals in core PTCs	54
Coordinating Center Tutors	539
Volunteer Community mobilizers	13,000

Source; Makau 2011 pp. 9 and 10.

been in place for about 15 years. It should be realized that the achievements of primary education in Uganda prior to UPE are also included in the UPE achievements to be discussed.

With the advent of UPE in Uganda, there has been increased access to education (Aguti, 2002; Grogan, 2008; National Development Plan 2010/11 – 2014/15, 2010). It is generally noted that enrollment of primary school going children shot up from 2.5 million in 1996 to 6.8 million in 2000 (Aguti, 2002) and 8.2 million in 2009 (National Development Plan 2010/11 – 2014/15, 2010). The increase was bigger in 1996 – 2000 (4 years, 4.3 million) than 2001 – 2009 (8 years, 1.4 million). The reason for the initial upsurge was the backlog of school age children who had not been accessing school and were now able to do so (Aguti, 2002).

In order to accommodate the numbers of pupils, the Ministry of Education and Sports embarked on putting up more buildings. For example, by the end of 1999, 4000 additional classrooms were constructed for primary school children while by the end of 2001, a total of 6321 had been constructed (Aguti, 2002). Since 1997, more teachers have been trained. To reduce the pupil-teacher ratio, there were deliberate efforts to restructure primary teacher education and to increase the number of teachers trained, retrained, and upgraded. This was under the education and teacher development project. As a result, between 1995 and 1999, 7800 in-service teachers had been trained or upgraded. Colleges and universities intensified distance education programs were designed to meet the UPE challenges.

In the 1990s, there was a move to improve the quality of teaching in the classroom. Although quality of teaching is still a challenge as a result of many factors, the Ministry of Education and Sports, through Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS) has tried to improve the quality of classroom teaching. TDMS, funded by various sources, was developed as part of the Primary Education and Teacher Development Project (PETDP). The overall aim was to improve teaching and learning in Primary schools by developing a teacher education system that integrated pre-service and in-service training approaches. In that regard, TDMS has been able to train

different categories of education staff ranging from principals of Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs) to community mobilizers. A summary of those trained by TDMS up to 2010 is given in Table 3. TDMS has itself not matched the numbers needed for UPE, but the addition of trained teachers that the existing PTCs would not have single handedly trained using full time residential training, is credit to the project.

Challenges of primary education in Uganda and recommendations

The main aim of this section is to highlight the challenges of Primary Education in Uganda and suggest possible solutions. The aim is to contribute to the suggestions given to policy makers to review the primary education sector for national development. There is no nation whose development is greater than its education system. Education is important for the provision of the public good whose returns are critical for sustained economic growth and social transformation (National Development Plan 2010/11 – 2014/15).

Politicization of the education system

Grogan (2008) succinctly argues that the rapid elimination of school fees at the primary school level was likely accelerated by the first direct elections for the president of Uganda which took place in 1996. As a campaign strategy, President Museveni made a promise to provide free primary schooling. An enumeration and advertising campaign was undertaken and the new school entrants began learning within few months of the presidential announcement. At the district level, the program was supervised by Resident District Commissioners (RDCs), some of whom had no technical know-how of education issues.

A politician can be an influential person in the community. By and large, his or her dictates and likes affect societal needs and demands. In instances where politicians dominate policy formulation and enforce policy

Table 4. Attrition of first UPE cohort in Uganda 1997 – 2003.

Year/ Class	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
P1	2.1 m						
P2		1.3 m					
P3			1.1 m				
P4				0.96 m			
P5					0.83 m		
P6						0.7 m	
P7							0.48 m (22%)

Source: Education Strategic Investment (2004 – 2015).

implementation, there is likely to be an unplanned economic outcome. The politician can persuade the uninformed member of society and some of the elites to comply with government policies. Despite the resistance the civil society may put across to protest such imbalance, the politician has a way of quelling such resistance and silencing intellectual voices that are advocating for change. In Uganda, a politician has become an important person, even at the Local Council 1; the Chairperson in a village wields a lot of influence in the management of a primary school in that village.

The solution to the above problem is proper consultation with and respect of technocrats. Education policy and review should be done by professionals in Teacher Training Institutions. Such is the system in Japan, where university professors, among other things, are also charged with supervising and reforming the education system as part of their outreach programs. Much as the government is credited for using technocrats to draft the Kajubi report, the accruing Government White Paper has never been debated. Besides, it is observed that copies of the Kajubi Commission Report are very rare and hard to get, to balance the debate in case it is allowed. Moreover, it is not clear why the Government White Paper has never been put forward for public debate. Nonetheless, it is important to use technocrats in reforming the country's primary education because as the age-old adage goes, "knowledge, unlike money, increases when it is shared".

Low completion rate of the primary cycle

According to the 2008 Education Act, primary education shall be universal and compulsory for children aged six and above, which shall last seven years. The government shall ensure that a child who drops out of school prior to completing primary education cycle attains basic education through alternative approaches. However, according to Byamugisha (2012), that objective has so far not been realized. Government, therefore, should ensure that children who enter school in primary one finish in

primary seven. It is transcribed; furthermore, in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (United Nations (2002)) documents that one of its objectives is to reduce the number of uneducated African youths. The aforesaid documents target the year 2015. This is when, it is estimated, all children in the world will have completed primary seven (Grogan, 2008). The attrition rate of school going children from primary one to primary seven is still high in Uganda as the cohort in Table 4 indicates.

The analysis shows that of the first cohort of UPE that started in 1997, only 22% successfully completed primary seven in 2003. This is a national average, but the attrition rate is worse in rural areas. It is to be noted, furthermore, that in 2005, only 28% of the pupils who enrolled in primary one completed primary seven whilst in 2009, the same percentage of the pupils who enrolled in primary one completed primary seven (Table 5). Going by the primary school completion rates, Uganda is doing very poorly and drastic measures must be taken to improve these rates.

The government, as noted earlier, should make sure that those children who enter school should be enabled to complete. In their report to the government, the Education Policy Review Commission (1989) states that only when every child is enrolled at the right age and does not quit school without completing the full cycle of primary education, it would not be possible to ensure that all the citizens have the basic education needed for giving a full life. However, such an ideal situation has not been taken into consideration. Although the government of Uganda has tried to provide universal primary education, it has not met all the obligations, as laid out in the international instruments. There is no enforceable legislation in Uganda that makes primary Education compulsory. Not all school going children enroll in primary one and some of those who enroll eventually drop out. There is no legislation that provides punitive measures for parents who do not ensure that their children attend school. Therefore, it is hereby suggested that Uganda should move beyond Universal Primary Education and venture into Universal Primary Education Completion. Primary Education should be free and

Table 5. Dropout rate of primary school pupils from 2005 to 2009. Primary Education: The Crisis of Numbers. Primary School Enrolment by Class (2005-2009).

Year/Class	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
P1	1,712,420	1,763,284	1,832,129	1,897,114	1,946,312
P2	1,175,032	1,199,325	1,213,486	1,318,238	1,349,356
P3	1,162,462	1,199,975	1,224,812	1,279,900	1,367,359
P4	1,019,290	1,054,288	1,096,256	1,164,640	1,212,182
P5	915,504	914,375	939,804	993,337	1,042,501
P6	759,220	763,253	761,212	795,021	833,559
P7	479,951	468,438	470,272	515,729	546,505
Grand total	7,223,879	7,362,938	7,537,971	7,763,979	8,297,780

Source: Education Strategic Investment (2004-2015).

compulsory.

Quality of education

There are fears that perhaps with the massive number in primary school enrollment without commensurate expansion in facilities, teachers and teaching learning materials may have compromised the quality of education. The Ministry of Education and Sports has raised this concern in its reports which say that the quality of teaching has probably been affected by the adverse pupil - teacher ratio after the introduction of UPE. In all countries of Africa, in which UPE was instituted, the elimination of the direct costs of schooling created an instantaneous large increase in school enrollment. Grogan (2008) notes that enrollment increased nearly by 70% in Malawi, 75% in Lesotho, and 22% in Kenya. However, the aggregate increase in primary school enrollment in Uganda was far beyond service delivery. In reference to Uganda, Aguti (2002) furthermore adds that UPE quality may have been compromised by the low morale of teachers.

There is an overemphasis of increased number of enrollment to the detriment of quality education. Issues to do with quantity and quality of primary education cannot be addressed or achieved in isolation from each other. Expanding accessibility is relatively meaningless, unless the education provided contributes to the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills. As Uganda moves towards 2015, the year set for achieving Millennium Development Goals, citizens should be worried that national efforts have focused, almost singularly, on the easy-to-measure goal of accessibility. National commitment to improving the quality of school education remains unclear since current country success is measured by achievement levels of universal access to school by boys and girls. Unfortunately, appropriate school education is overlooked in the pledge to get every child to school.

No doubt, the benefits that can accrue from access to basic education are commendable. It may be argued that access to education will contribute to higher personal life-time gaining, smaller and healthier families, reduced incidence of HIV/AIDS, higher economic growth and increased participation in the democratization process among other things. But, this section would like to add that true benefits of schooling are derived from the learning that takes place in school. The quality of education matters just as much as the quantity. Indeed, improving the quality of education requires more than just increasing the level of in-puts at school level. Improving quality requires the government to make necessary structural changes in the institutions, including accountability systems that measure pupil performance, incentives to improve performance and local level autonomy that gives schools and parents the power to suggest change.

Prior to the introduction of UPE in Uganda, most schools charged additional fees through Parents Teachers Association (PTA). Some of that money was used to supplement teachers' salaries. That is because the remuneration of a primary school teacher is quite low. Aguti (2002) candidly stresses that teachers must rely on extremely low salaries. With the introduction of UPE, parents no longer pay this PTA, and the teachers cry for a reasonable increase of salaries has fallen on deaf ears. Their struggle for using legitimate means to let the bureaucrats understand the situation has been harshly dealt with. A teacher therefore continues to struggle in this world of high cost of living, with a daily remuneration of about \$3.5, in a country where some politicians earn \$400 per day. Such disparity in remuneration keeps the teacher's morale low.

This chapter recommends that the government puts in place enough facilities needed for learning and teachers be given a reasonable pay. Equitable sharing of national resources is a right for every Ugandan including teachers. This chapter furthermore recommends that there should be national restructuring of salaries in

Uganda, not done by politicians, but by a Salary Review Committee preferably from the Ministry of Public Service. Politicians, particularly parliamentarians, in fixing their own salaries, get a lion's share due to hedonism. There should be rational salary structuring for all public servants. Muzzling teachers will not make them teach well enough because, as the saying goes, "you may take the donkey to the well, but you cannot force it to drink". A teacher may be suppressed, and seemingly goes to class, but may not teach to maximum capacity. It is one thing for the children to go to school under UPE policy, and quite another for them to learn adequately in school.

Corruption

Corruption is a major problem in Uganda. Paradoxically, corruption is extensively condemned at all levels in Uganda, right from the president's office up to Local Council 1. But it is abetted by the very people who claim to abhor it. Such hypocrisy keeps the vice much alive in the country. Graft, therefore, is discouraged only in theory, while in practice, people in public office embezzle public funds at all levels. Measures against corruption are, but mere lip-service, with a few junior officers tried and released on a bond paid using the embezzled public funds. No measures are imposed to ensure due return of stolen money!

That said, the capitation grant that is sent to UPE schools dwindles before it reaches the schools because it is embezzled at every level where it passes. Grogan (2008) posits that of the money remitted by government to UPE schools; only about 13% reaches schools. He adds that, most of the grant is absorbed by local politicians and administrators. That suggests that schools in Uganda which were dependent on revenue from school fees collection have suffered greatly for there is little operational capital. That is even worse in rural areas: because, as Reinikka and Swensson (2004) intimate, schools in better off communities receive larger fractions of the original grant money because less is embezzled. Ugandans need to walk the talk right from the top to the lowest levels if corruption is to be eliminated.

Poverty in the rural areas

As said earlier, the capitation grant that reaches the schools is less than what is actually sent. Therefore, the people in the rural areas, who had thought that they would be relieved of a burden, could not cope with the demands of educating their children. Poverty in the rural areas is at alarming levels, with some people living on less than one dollar a day. The recurrent pronouncement by some politicians at all levels that the economy is improving is a political gimmick, because it is not seen in

terms of service delivery and household incomes. It is noted that whatever achievements have been made, have been realized within the context of economic reforms that are informed by neoliberalism (Grogan, 2008). For a country like Uganda, such successes are assessed in terms of macro-economic targets and poverty reduction with little consideration for the human rights aspects at the micro level. As the population of Uganda increases, the GDP is also likely to increase. This is usually the index of development quoted by the politicians. But, as matter of fact, the GDP per capita should be the index for economic development. This is when GDP is divided by the population. The GDP per capita of Uganda is at \$453, which means that on average a Ugandan earns \$1.3 per day. Bearing in mind that a number of Ugandans earn huge sums of money, then it means that the poor in the villages earn less than one dollar a day. It becomes difficult for them to keep their children in school because, after failing to balance the cost of running a school on capitation grant only, school administrators have irregularly imposed some fee on parents.

Some of the items that the parents have to provide include school uniform, scholastic materials like: pens, pencils, and exercise books, lunch and at times contribute to building fund. That is in spite of the fact that this pupil does not contribute much to the family income during school days which account for 75% of the child's primary school life. The Ministry of Education and Sports' section of the government's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) was developed in synchronization with the ESSP 2007-2015. PEAP stipulates that there will be increasing ability of the poor to raise their income. It further stipulates that this would enhance the quality of life of the poor, which is a national target. The education section of PEAP is geared towards those aspects of the education sector that must directly address poverty issues. However, the plan seems to have remained on paper. Uganda needs economic transformation rather than political rhetoric. There should be a move away from a peasantry economy to a middle class economy for the nation to adequately train human resources at primary level.

Theoretical curriculum

A lot has been said about the primary school education curriculum in Uganda that ends up producing job seekers rather than job makers. During the colonial era, most subjects were taught according to the British Syllabus until 1974. British type of examinations measured a student's progress through primary to other levels. In 1975, the government implemented a local curriculum, and for a short time, most school materials were published in Uganda. But, at the same time, the economy

deteriorated and violence increased. The education system suffered the effects of economic decline and political instability during the Amin's regime (Kwesiga, 2002). As a result, the quality of education declined, school maintenance standards suffered, teachers fled the country, morale and productivity deteriorated along with real incomes, and many facilities were damaged by warfare and vandalism.

In order to reestablish the national priority on education, the present government adopted a two-phase policy, to rehabilitate buildings and establish minimal conditions for instructions, and to improve efficiency and quality of education through teacher training and curriculum up grading. Important long-term goals included establishing universal primary education, extending the seven-year primary cycle to eight or nine years, and shifting the emphasis from fairly academic to more technical and vocational training. Whereas UPE has been taken as a government policy, the rest of the goals have not taken root (Annual Learning Assessment Report, 2011).

The primary school education curriculum is so inadequate, such that those who complete the cycle are not employable (Nyerere, 1973). There is a mentality that those who go to school will eventually get white collar jobs, but the primary seven leavers in Uganda do not have the skills to be employed. That is why jobs that need more practical aspects, like watch, motor vehicle, and mobile phone repair are dominated by less schooled Ugandans. The primary school education curriculum in Uganda is not practical because it is only meant to prepare the pupils for secondary education. Nyerere (1977), when he suggested that primary school education should last for 8 years, and those to start primary schooling should be 8 year olds, he had in mind a primary school product who would contribute to societal development in Tanzania. Nyerere's argument was corroborated by the Education Policy Review Commission Report (1987), when it suggested 8 or 9 years of primary education. This chapter suggests eight years as a primary school cycle. Noteworthy is the observation that the primary curriculum is still academic and examination oriented as observed by the Revised Education Sector Strategic Plan 2007-0215 (2007). Moreover, the examinations are oriented towards assessment of improvement rather than assessment for improvement. There are efforts made to revise the primary school curriculum taken by the Ministry of Education and Sports through the National Curriculum Development Center. There has been effort to let the teacher know and try to equip the learners with knowledge, competences, attitudes, skills and values. The bottom line is life-long learning with thematic curriculum initially developed for primary one to primary three. Content is arranged in themes that put together related knowledge which makes learning clearer and

avoids repetition. It describes what the child is expected to know, understand and be able to perform in relation to each theme. Implementation of that curriculum was effected through the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training, support, supervision and improved learners' performance.

However, there have been challenges of the thematic curriculum. Some teachers have not yet learnt how to use methods that would help in handling the large number of learners. Transfer of teachers has affected implementation of thematic curriculum especially when those brought on board are not trained in this new curriculum. Furthermore, some private schools have been slow in implementing the curriculum.

This chapter suggests that the primary curriculum should be revised further to make training more practical, and many stakeholders should be involved in this curriculum review. There is need for a continued and compulsory CPD for teachers to enable them to share methods like the group participatory approach. Continuous assessment is a better alternative than relying on examinations for elimination. A curriculum has to be in line with the utilitarian principles espoused in the argument that its outcomes must serve the common good (Barrow and Woods, 1988).

Inequity

One of the key focus areas of any effective educational reform should be equity, equality and redress. This chapter emphasizes equity only, but as Mazurek et al. (2000) stress, the noted overlap of equity and redress means that light will be shed on the latter two. The disparities earlier created between rich and poor schools, the advantaged and disadvantaged pupils and gender imbalance still exist. Furthermore, failure to implement affirmative action should clearly show that inequity still exists up to today. However, this chapter will stress gender which is the most affected area of inequity in Uganda.

In the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, article 33(1) stipulates that women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of person with men. Article 33 (5) furthermore states that women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalance created by history, tradition or custom. Despite the above pronouncements, the girl child in Uganda is still discriminated against, especially by tradition and custom. With many cash-strapped families, where choice has to be made as to who should or should not attend school, females are commonly discriminated against. Even at school, the dropout rates, except for employment, is slightly higher for girls than boys. Juuko and Kabonesa (2007) reaffirm that in Uganda, the right to education of the girl child has historically been affected

Table 6. Dropout rate by gender and reason in Mpigi District.

Reason/ gender	Lack of interest	Pregnancy	Marriage	Fees	Jobs	Sickness	Family responsibilities	Dismissed disobedience	Others undisclosed	Total
Female	65205	6695	9448	13016	4053	18279	25677	703	19997	163073
male	74884	241	2085	12708	7412	19348	21689	1429	21238	161034

Source: Uganda Education Statistics Abstract, 2002

by a complex interaction of political, social, household, economic and community factors. Kwesiga (2002) also notes a negative trend towards access by women to primary education. Table 6 shows primary school dropout rates by gender and the reasons behind. The sample was taken from Mpigi District as an example. Table 6 shows that the difference between girl and boys who drop out of school may be small. But what are important are the reasons behind dropping out of school. More boys than girls get out of school due to lack of interest. That implies that girls are more interested in education than boys. More girls get out of school due to pregnancy than the boys responsible for pregnancy. More girls than boys get out of school to get married. This is a cultural practice; because females marry at a relatively younger age than males. Another factor is that females are not expected to have the economic means for getting married. Girls, further, are looked at as a form of wealth which accrues from bride price. More girls than boys get out of school due to lack of school fees, because, as noted earlier, where investment choice in poor families has to be made, boys are preferred. More boys than girls get out of school due to sickness. More girls than boys get out of school due to commitment to family responsibilities. More boys than girls quit schooling to look for jobs (most girls

go out to work as house girls); more boys than girls get out of school due to disobedience resulting in expulsion; and more boys than girls who get out of school have the reason undisclosed.

Although indicators for access to primary education in Uganda show positive trends, infrastructure in primary schools remains inadequate due to straining budgetary resources allocated to the education sector. The percentage for total public expenditure on primary education has been varying since the year 2000, from 69.7% to about 58% by 2011; consequently low completion rates of primary schooling. The 2006 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey results indicate that an average 31.7% of the adult population aged 15-24 years have completed at least primary education. The full realization of equity however, has been undermined by combination of social ills that include civil unrests, HIV/AIDS, early pregnancies, unemployment, poverty, and labor exploitation.

This chapter suggests revisiting several cultures which discriminate against women. All children in the family should have equal status and the state should reinforce this situation. Adjacent, the advice of the World Bank (2012) in their Human Capital-Synthesis Report should be considered seriously. The Report advises nations to promote

inclusive growth for economic transformation. It is important to note that when a girl child is educated, the outcome is some of the highest returns of all development investments, private, social, family and society. Investment in girls' education reduces women's fertility rates, lowers infant mortality rates, lowers maternal mortality rates, protects against HIV/AIDS infection. This is because education equips the girls with knowledge about those ills, and they are educated about their possible solutions. In addition, investment in girls' education increases women's labor force participations and earnings, and creates intergenerational benefits. Therefore, all imbalances in provision of primary education should be addressed.

Other issues

There are many other challenges that are worth of mention. Grogan (2008) argues that, because school fees were abolished at primary school level in Uganda before infrastructural improvement in the school system had been carried out, the access shock resulted in decrease in resources available per pupil and per teacher. There was also a large increase in the pupil - teacher ratio at 83:1. Therefore, there are fewer text books,

classrooms, desks, teachers, and teachers houses (Rajani, 2011). Furthermore, the abolition of payment of fees means that PTAs have reduced influence upon primary schools, although they remain resilient as a powerful, though informal management body. Conflicts have arisen between the School Management Committees which are official organs, and the informal PTAs. Capitation grant sent by government was not enough to run administrative costs in schools. The budget of 14.8% allocated to education was not enough as the Ministry of Education and Sports had to run with deficit at times creating management crises. Furthermore, unlike in developed countries, the language of instruction remains different from what the child uses at home and in the community.

Prioritization by government would be required for solving the above problems. According to President Museveni, political opportunism, eminent in Uganda, involves failure to tell people what the country needs. This chapter notes that the president's pronouncement denotes lack of proper prioritization, putting more investments to where it should not go. Primary education should be among the sectors given top priority.

CONCLUSION

Providing education to a Ugandan child is not a privilege of the child but it is his or her right and it is the duty of the state to provide such education. This is not only for the good of the child but also for the good of society. In order to make a realistic cost-effective investment, this country needs to invest in primary education to realize the much needed social, economic and political development. The modern workforce, towards which Uganda is heading in industrial and agricultural sectors, requires a different set of competencies other than those that are there today. Young people now need to follow written directions that assume an understanding of abstract concepts. Schooling children need to go beyond acquiring the basics of reading, writing and counting. They need to know how to solve problems, using vigorous methods of problem identification, hypothesis formulation, data collection and analysis and reporting. Learners should be enabled to think critically so as to make informed decisions.

The education system in Uganda must interact with other government systems, central and local government as well as the public service. It is incumbent upon families, communities and state to utilize resources well for the education of their children. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Sports should interact with the international community and other agencies to offer external support.

It is important to reiterate that in any country, and in Uganda in particular, the government has the most important role and obligation in reforming education, and

they need to be held accountable by the citizens to perform well. However, neither educational assessments, nor technocratic policy reform processes alone, will bring about the policy and service delivery changes necessary to improve school education. All stakeholders: citizens, parents, academicians, members of the local community, educationists, and politicians, need to take collaborative action. Such action must be locally driven and by everyone concerned to improve the quality of education, and ultimately the quality of development, in focusing on accountability and bringing about a sustained better education service delivery. As citizens have a right to demand better responsiveness and answerability from all position bearers, as responsible citizens, they must, and should be enabled to, play their part.

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