

UGANDA MARTYRS UNIVERSITY

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Analysis of the Formulation and Implementation of UPE Policy in Uganda

LECTURER: Br. BYRUHANGA Aloysius

STUDENT: OUMA Francis Michael

INTRODUCTION

In This paper I analyzed the formulation and implementation of UPE policy in Uganda giving spectacular look at critical areas like the objectives of UPE, backup policies developed by The Ministry of Education and Sports to help in the implementation of UPE, achievements and challenges of UPE policy in Uganda. I have also advanced some recommendation for likely improvement of the UPE in Uganda. My conclusion is my academic position about UPE implementation in Uganda.

A policy is a set of statements that show a course of action of an organization. UPE in this case is an educational policy encompassing teaching, learning, conduct, technical competence and funding of Education for all in Uganda. UPE is not an exclusive program first formulated and implement in Uganda but it roots in international initiatives to promote the rights to education of every world citizenry. Universal Primary Education, UPE, is the provision of basic education to all children of primary school going age (six years and above). Its broad goal is to eradicate illiteracy while equipping every individual with the basic skills and knowledge with which to exploit the environment for both self and national development.

Education is fundamental human right and a basis of other human rights. It should be realized that he right to education cannot be realized unless primary education is made genuinely free, and adequately financed out of general taxation. Therefore education is not just a fundamental human right as recognized in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of 1948 which states that: *Everyone has a right to education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.* Education is also an enabling right, which unlocks a wider set of civil, political and economic rights. Despite the weakening link between primary education and labour market returns in most African countries, education still remains a necessary condition of formal sector employment and has been shown to have significant efforts on agricultural productivity.

Since the 1990 Jomtien World Conference, Education for All (EFA) issues has been subjected to unprecedented rhetoric in international summits. However, there have also been genuine attempts to put the goal of EFA at the centre of national attention and action. On the basis of recent education statistics, Uganda is one of the countries that have demonstrated meaningful progress towards EFA over the past dozen years (e.g., *Uganda EFA 2000 Assessment report*;

2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report). The EFA advocated for Universal access to education so as to provide basic elementary education as a means to learning to know, to do and to live in harmoniously in order to improve on one's life and transform society.¹

School education was introduced in Uganda by the white missionaries mainly for the children of chiefs or aristocratic life in the pre-colonial kingdoms/ societies and to provide for functionaries needed by the British colonial government. So right from the onset, this school system was not for all and it therefore grew to become highly selective and competitive with fewer and fewer students continuing to the next level of education. As a result, many Ugandans remained illiterate with literacy rates standing at only 65% with the primary education reaching only about 50 percent of the age group. Besides this background, prior to independence school (formal) education, which was introduced by missionaries in 1877, was modeled along the British system of education. This heritage is still evident in the hierarchical 7-4-2-3 school system even today). That is to say, like in Britain Uganda still follows 7 years of primary, 4 years secondary (O level), 2 years higher school (A level) and a minimum of 3 years at University level. At the end of each stage, there is a national examination. Right from the onset, this school system was not for all and it therefore grew to become highly selective and competitive with fewer and fewer pupils/ students continuing to the next level of education. As a result many Ugandans remained Illiterate with literacy rates standing at only 65% with the primary education reaching only 50% of the age group. In Uganda, Senteza kajubi report on education policy review commission defended its position on universal primary education saying

“Only when every child is enrolled at the right age and does not leave school without completing the full cycle of primary education would it be possible to ensure that all the citizens have the basic education needed for living full life. Also it will help in transformation of society leading to a greater unity among the people, higher moral standards and an accelerated growth economy”

It is against this background that in October 1996, that President Yoweri Museveni launched a policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE) sometimes referred to as the “Big Bang” Approach in accordance with the government White Paper on Education of 1992. Under this policy, government was to provide ‘free’ education to a maximum of four children from each family.

¹ Nkurunziza, R.K and Magumya, L., 2003. *Developing a Culture of Peace and Human Rights in Africa*. Kampala; Konrad Adenauer Stiftung p. 115

This has now changed because President Museveni has now said that all children of school-going age should benefit from Universal Primary Education (UPE) (Olupot, 2002).

UPE policy/program was rolled out not only to recognize education as a basic human right but also to fit into the government's mission of building a modern state and a modern economy in Uganda.

Under this policy, government was to provide Free and compulsory education that is fees for up to four children maximum from each family of which two must be girls or if there is a disabled child, he/she must be given priority. This was a broad effort to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) for all children aged 6 to 12 years by 2000. The President's decision aimed at removing a key obstacle for families, also sending a signal on the importance of education. However, President Museveni has now said, "All children of school – going age should benefit from Universal Primary Education (UPE)."

UPE OBJECTIVES:

- Making basic education accessible to the learners and relevant to their needs as well as meeting national goals
- Making education equivalent in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities
- Establishing, providing and maintaining quality education as the basis for promoting the necessary resource development
- Initiating a fundamental positive transformation of society in the social, economic and political field
- Ensuring that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans by providing initially the minimum necessary facilities and resources, progressively the optimal facilities.
- Enable every child to enter and remain school until they complete the primary education cycle.

Universal Primary Education (UPE) program was launched in October 1996. It is a package of reforms designed specifically to focus on basic education (primary) access and quality. It was designed to address some of the shortcomings of the educational reforms and also to ensure that all children of school-going age have access to education, hence making basic education a right for all children.

In consonance with the existing laws, The Ministry of Education and Sports developed some policies to ensure the smooth and sustainable implementation of the program. Onek (2003) highlighted the policies to include Policy on access, equity, quality, books distribution, punishment, coaching, capitation grants, extra charges and guidelines on the Use of UPE and SPG, teacher recruitment and deployment.

- *The policy on access asserts that education as a matter of right should not be prejudiced by considerations of creed, race, tribe, sex or any other form of discrimination.*
- *The policy on equity says that education is a right that no Ugandan should be excluded from, for example, the poor, rural and girls. But all must be accorded the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.*
- *The policy on books distribution and use emphasizes books in the hands of the learners; this would build a reading culture.*
- *Policy on punishment condemns corporal punishment as corrective measures in the schools because they create physical and psychological conditions which undermine learning processes.*
- *Under policy on coaching, coaching was banned and in case it was there, it should be free of any charge.*
- *Policy on capitation grants and Fees asserted that the government would provide free education for all children of school going age.*
- *Extra charges were also to be avoided because they would make financial demands which would make education unaffordable. Here municipal and city schools may levy little charges with the consent of the parents with approval of the ministry of education and sports.²*

ACHIEVEMENTS OF UPE

In assessing the achievements of UPE in Uganda, it should be noted that Uganda's education system is functioning under the very specific context of transition, that is, economic, social and political transitions.

Quality teaching and learning: In the years following the implementation of the UPE program everyone, especially the politicians, extravagantly touted its success and sought to be re-elected on this achievement. The local and central governments through their respective Ministries of

² Onek, S.B. (2003). *Contributions and Roles of The Ministry of Education and Sports to UPE Program* (Unpublished Material). Commissioner pre-primary and primary education. p. 2-3

Education, with support from different NGOs and the development partners were parted on the back for having had the vision to implement it and help to expand access, improve quality of teaching and learning through improved supply of logistics, curricula development as well as motivating teachers.

Increased enrollment was felt significantly. This visible enrollment balloon is an achievement in the numbers of pupils between 6-12 years joining the primary cycle of primary education. Enrollment figures after the launch of UPE shot up from nearly 2.5 million in 1996 to nearly 6.8 million in 2000. Enrollment ratios also improved first rose dramatically to 123% in 1997 and then decreased to 117% in 2000. UNICEF (2007 p.16) said, "*Affirmative indicators include an enrollment rate of 84% in 2006.*" The Ministry of Education and Sports categorically states that before UPE, the enrollment level was 60%, but after the implementation of UPE, there was a shot up of the enrolment to 90%. This increase was mainly due to two reasons: The school age children who had not been accessing school because of disability were now able to do so because of the inclusion opened up by UPE.

More children who had attained the school age but would not have afforded education prior UPE were now able to join school since UPE waved of tuition fees. Besides those, the existing legal regulations in Uganda today, strongly support education for all school age going children and strongly stipulated the rule for universal access to basic education including the right of minority group.

The UPE also opened up avenues for better funding of education, in 2003, the education budget took about 24% of the national budget up from 7% in the 1990 and 17% in 1994-5³. The policy of capitation grants to the schools improved the supply of more learning materials. Learning materials are fundamental for teaching and learning. It upholds teachers' morale and pupils' interest. These materials include text books, charts and sports equipment. This has greatly improved in most schools, this is because the government has increased her spending on teaching learning materials through direct distributions of textbooks to schools and the school capitation grant which as a percentage to be sent on scholastic materials like planning books, scheme of work books, manila charts, pieces of chalk and sports equipment. The Ministry of

³ Ibid op cit

Education and Sports (2004) say as that from 1997-2002, schools received 5,000/= per child per year of those from P.1 –P3 and those in P. 4-P.7 were 8,100/= per child per year. From 2004, schools started receiving 100,000/= per month. Out of these, 20% is for co-curricular activities, 15% is for school management, 35% is for extra instructional materials/ scholastic materials and 10% for administration. In 2003, 24% of the national budget was allocated for education and primary education took 65%. This has supported many rural (upcountry) schools which had limited fund to purchase the above for effective teaching and learning. Besides the capitation grant, the government also put in place over 31 billion shillings to be invested in test books. The Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) present its finding that a total of 7,065,907 text books and supplementary readers were provided to government aided schools.

Education for Girls is another big related achievement that this policy has attained through is specific focus on the education of girls. Ministry of Education and Sports (2009) cites for instance 1 million girls and 1.2 million boys responded immediately; by 2001 and this is more than the 49% of girls that had been enrolled by 2000. UPE undoubtedly has increased the enrollment of girls in the school as more girls access primary education. The Ministry of Education and Sports in 2005 after a comprehensive analysis of basic education found out that from P1-P5 girls equal boys Pupils. P 6 and P 7, girls are 47% and 43% respectively better than earlier records like in 1995 were girls were 41% and 38% in P.6 and P.7 respectively. Currently girls are 49.6% of total enrolment.⁴ This improvement came up because the UPE policy sensitized the parents, made schools more girls' friendly (separate latrine for boys and girls- this alone increased enrollment by 3%, guidance and counseling etc). Affirmative action for the girl child was brought by UPE into the educational sphere. In June 2000, the Vice President, Dr. Specioza Kazibwe launched a national strategy for girls education in Uganda as an example of the necessary actions for promoting girls' education.

The UPE policy also came along with policies that support girls' education like Girls Education Movement (GEM) which encouraged the girls to finish their cycle of education. Today we see

⁴ Ministry of Education and Sports (2005). *A comprehensive Analysis of Basic Education in Uganda*. Kampala: Ministry of Education and Sports. P vii

girls being given PLE hygiene Kit.⁵ Strategies for the promotion of girls' education are; developing an 'empowering environment,' strengthening school-work linkages, improving safety, promoting peer-to-peer support and learning networks, increasing number of qualified teachers and adopting 'whole school' approaches. These are all to encourage them to study.

Modification of Uganda's primary School Curriculum: Before the implementation of the UPE, The Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) say that the curriculum had never been modified since 1970s; it was therefore outlived its goodness. UPE brought in place an interactive/child friendly curriculum.

Assessment method was also greatly improved. Here, UNEB formed another section called National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE). Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) further say that this section was to monitor and assess learning using aptitude test, assignment, course test, oral expression, written and practical exams to test the various abilities.

Guidance and counseling has also been instituted in all the UPE schools. This now has a whole commissioner in charge in the ministry of education and sports. This became very necessary because it helps pupils in choices of career and subjects as well as handling their emotional needs.

Increased construction of primary schools and supply of facilities: the introduction of UPE brought about an urgent need for classroom. In 1997, the existing stock of permanent classrooms was 45,000. By the end of 2005, the number had risen to 82,165 representing an increase of 82.6%. This was achieved through vigorous building efforts by the government, the NGOs and the communities. In addition to building classrooms, many new schools have also been built others government aided. In 1996, primary schools were 7351 but in 2005 they were 16,000 that is an increase with 86%.

Increased construction of primary schools and supply of facilities was another show piece at political campaign rallies. For example, by end of 1999, 4,000 additional classrooms

⁵ James William Mugenyi (2009). Girls who stay in school are national assets. The Sunday vision 8th November 2009 p. 11

*were constructed for primary school children while by the end of 2001; a total of 6,321 had been completed.*⁶

There has also been a successful narrowing in primary enrollment gaps between the rich and the poor. The wealth bias that had characterized access to primary education prior UPE had been tremendously reduced.

Training and recruitment of more teachers: An increase in the number of children in school invariably led to an increase in the demand for teachers. As a result, there have been deliberate efforts to restructure Primary Teacher Education and to increase the number of trained, retrained and upgraded teachers. For instance between 1995 and 1999, 7,800 in – service teachers were trained or upgraded. In addition, 3,023 new teachers completed their training. Other quick programs like Northern Integrated Teachers’ Education Project (NITEP), Mubende Integrated Teacher Education Project (MITEP) and Teachers development and management systems (TDMS) were put in place to help train teachers and improve their capacities. The Ministry of Education and Sports (2005) said that by November 2005, there were already 129,024 teachers on the government payroll. These represent an increase in teacher’s recruitment by 58%.⁷ The UPE Policy has therefore improved not only in the number of teacher’s country wide but also on the quality of the teachers. Primary teachers increased from 99,237 in 1997/1998 to 110,366 teachers 1999-2000, this had been through training more teachers to meet the demand in the schools. Many of the untrained were enrolled into distant learning and in-service for professionalization of the teaching service in Uganda.

Teachers’ conditions and salaries increased a great deal with the introduction of UPE. In 1995, teachers were paid 50,000/=, this improved to 100,000/= in 1998 and Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) says that the salaries appreciated to 200,000/= in 2006. This help to raise the economic status of the teachers.

⁶ Kisubi, T. Alfred, (2008). *Critique and Analysis of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda in General and Suggestions for Improvement in Particular Local Areas*. Texas: University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. p.7

⁷ Ministry of Education and Sports (2005). *A Comprehensive Analysis of Basic Education in Uganda*. Kampala: Ministry of Education and Sports. P vii

Special Needs Education: The program also helped to bring to light the challenge of providing education for all and special challenge of providing education to children with disability (Special Needs Education). Before UPE, children with disabilities were working hard to meet their needs, but most such children were out of school. Special needs school benefited from UPE funds. More significantly, children with disabilities are being integrated into normal school through inclusive education approach. To show the great achievement under inclusive education, The Ministry of Education and Sports (2005) said: *“The number of disabled children increased by 38 % with the advent of UPE, that is, from 157,920 in 2000 to 218,380 in 2004.”*⁸ Children with various kinds of disabilities and impairments also have schools established for them, for example, schools of the blind in Gulu.

Inclusion education: Many of the people of disadvantaged positions were brought on board with the advent of UPE. Cases in point can be the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK), Basic Education Urban Poverty Areas (BEUPA), and Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education (COPE). These are initiatives aimed at increasing the access of disadvantaged children who are not able to attend formal school, many of whom are girls. Doris (2003) reports that both COPE and ABEK are programmes facilitated by UNICEF Uganda In line with the UPE. *“So far 162 COPE/ABEK centers benefiting 3502 disadvantaged girls and 2,906 disadvantaged boys in 10 districts have received support.”*⁹

Policy on Corporal Punishment: The UPE backed by the Ministry of Education and Sports’ policy on punishment has helped to make the school environment a better learning place. Teacher in many schools do not use corporal punishment as a corrective means in the school, this would create physical and psychological conditions that restrict learning. Learning today on most schools is interactive with special consideration to the dignity of every pupil. This is in conformity with what Akinpelu (1978, p.48) said that the “education of children should not be by coercion, blows and tears.” This corporal punishment is savage and not educational, therefore, affects education of learners unstable and hence, prompting poor performance.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Doris, K.M., 2003. Gender sensitive educational policy and practice: a Uganda case study. Kampala: UNESCO. p. 4

Efficiency in Education System: Efficiency in Uganda's education system has been improved by UPE, here looking at internal and external efficiencies, significant improvement has been noted. Efficiency is about the cost benefit analysis of achievement of goals, that is, how the school education system is attaining maximum output from the least input injected in it.

External efficiency can be focused at in terms of how the primary education system is preparing the learners to their roles and responsibilities in the community, for example, passing examinations, acquiring skills and attitudes. This mass education as helped in disseminating basic skills which are practically what I can call spill over benefits of education. Many children even in the villages today know the importance of washing hands before and after eating or after using the latrine, personal hygiene has improved because of the elementary science they learn. Others can now count and sum money. These are bare minimum examples I have given but they imply a positive role of the UPE in building learners for effectiveness in the society.

Internal efficiency focuses at how the schools transform inputs into outputs. Today we see that there has been encouragement of the formation of PTAs and School Management Committees. This empowers management to efficiency.

Measures to improve transparency and accountability at school level in combination with predictable flows of aid permitted remarkable efficiency gains in the use of sector resources. District and Headteachers have been empowered to manage their budgets through trainings by the ministry of education and sports.

Thematic Curriculum: One of the greatest challenges children faced in school is the ability to relate concepts of what they study in class to what is familiar in their daily lives. Learning in a foreign language is far different from learning in a child's mother tongue. The combination of limited instructional materials and a poor teaching methodology leads to more confusion, not only for students but for the teacher as well. It is every parent's pride to see their children achieve success in school. Some children never perform well; they dislike school and their entire learning process turn into a difficult experience. Literacy classes in an informal setting using the learners' mother tongue as the language of instruction. Has been able to get even the children who would normally be considered "less intelligent" to understand, relate and participate in all that was being taught. The children who would normally be considered "drop-outs" turned into organized, responsible children that were proud of having attained education

skills admired by the parents, teacher as well as the other students. Parents often appreciated the fact that their children were able to read and write much better than before. These children learnt to read and write because their learning was meaningful to them. Wonders are on how much success teachers would have achieved through teaching learners in a language they did not understand. During classes learner's they brought with them and expressed the knowledge they already had from their home, culture, environment and community. They were able to give examples that were related to the topics they were learning about. Therefore, classes become interesting there than were not boring because every student participated. Students can now draw pictures related to the subject. This encourages active participation by students in the learning process because they understood what was being discussed and what was asked of them. Students were helped to think rather than cram their answers which enabled them to increase their expectation of success. Besides, the stress that comes with teaching and thinking in a foreign language is reduced when students learn in their mother tongue. A teacher is able to find the appropriate teaching aids from the environment while the teacher is able to illustrate and explain what she or he is teaching using local examples. This also appeals to subjects deemed difficult such as science or mathematics. Using a language learners are well-versed with eliminates the assumption that a teacher needs a lot of instructional materials to teach a certain concept or subject. In addition, the student is able make a transfer of knowledge from what he or she is familiar with to what is unfamiliar, especially when they learn it later in another language like English. This is a very practical teaching/learning policy of teaching children in lower primary using a local language as the mode of instruction.

Community participation and integration: The school Community has greatly been integrated into the school system by UPE policy; the Parents Teachers Association (PTAs) in conjunction School Management Committee (SMCs) members should regularly visit the school to check attendance and take necessary measures to curb indiscipline and laxity among teachers and pupils, and withdrawal of children, especially girls from school.

The PTA executives and SMC members have been trained in management; evaluation and monitoring to enable them carry out their supervisory role more effectively. These bodies are entrusted with the responsibilities for ensuring all school entry-age children are in schools, tracking all enrolled children to ensure their continuation in program, ensure that the quality of learning/teaching and the school environment are improved.

The UPE Policy in Uganda has also drawn various Local and International NGOs and Agencies to the support of education in Uganda, they have often given both technical and financial support and some have been directly involved in monitoring the implementation of the various gender sensitive education policies and programmes. These include UNICEF, USAID, FAWE, and other partners in development in the field of education.

CHALLENGES OF UPE

The implementation of the Universal Primary Education Policy in Uganda has faced many challenges. They range from inadequate infrastructure, irresponsible attitudes of some key stakeholders, misallocation and misappropriation of funds and materials, and misconceptions about the policy.

Shortage of qualified teachers: this has been a problem in Uganda for a considerable number of years right from the inception of formal education. Odaet (1988) says that one of the major problems facing the education systems in Uganda is "*the shortage of qualified teachers and the increasing number of unqualified teachers.*" This problem has also been noted in 2001 as still persisting in the Ugandan education system¹⁰. The policy makers and implementer of the UPE did not consider this fact and due to the rush to quickly implement UPE in Uganda because of the political package it came with, untrained teachers in form of Licensed Teachers (LT) were co-opted into the system so as to keep the program going. This actually cheated the quality of education in Uganda a great deal. The lack of pedagogical skills and professionalism with inadequate mentor made education to go the wrong direction. A saying goes that there if no education better that its teachers. This implies that UPE has had problem in the implementations because of inadequate teacher which still persist up-to-date.

The Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) shows those only 55% urban schools and 13% of rural schools provide feeding to the learners. This shows that there is serious feeding difficulty in majority of places/schools. Just as soldier marches on his stomach, pupils also need proper

¹⁰ The rights to education in Uganda: a myth or a reality? Special reference to the UPE program. A research presented at the public debate on economic, social and cultural rights in Uganda. 21st November 2001 at Uganda martyrs university. By the Access to Justice Project. Foundation for Human Rights Initiative.

nutrition while at home and also in the schools because the process of teaching and learning is very hectic. Here, with the UPE implementation, there was a ban on charging money in the schools for feeding yet the government could not also provide alternatives to the situation. Many pupils come from relatively far off place, that is, the proximity of their homes and the schools are not very near especially for rural schools. Kisubi (2008 p. 8) cites Esther Mukyala, a journalist quoting Yoweri Museveni warning that Headteachers who were charging lunch fees under the Universal Primary Education scheme would end up in jail. Museveni advised rich parents, who insist that their children must have lunch at school, to take them to private schools instead of forcing poor parents to pay for meals. This was because of persistent reports that pupils are forced out of school because their parents cannot afford lunch fees. Nobody is allowed to charge what he called 'mandatory charges in UPE schools.' The Government introduced UPE to ensure that all children get education, he said. Under UPE, parents and the Government have different roles. The parents provide meals, exercise books, uniform, pens and ensure hygienic conditions, he added. The Government pays teachers' salaries, provides textbooks, libraries and laboratories. He advised leaders to concentrate on problems that affect the UPE program, like addressing the performance of teachers. He informed the population that the NRM believed in educating the masses, hence the introduction of UPE and Universal Secondary Education programs."¹¹

Given an objective criticism to this piece of information from the head of state, the policy that banned payment even for meals at schools are very unrealistic because nutrition and learning correlated; a child cannot learn optimally her he/she is hungry. Attention is divided between learning and meeting the biological need for food.

Repetition still exist: This policy was put in place to prevent congested classes. This is an indicator of internal inefficiency is that Uganda has relatively high levels of grade repetition and dropout and a widespread practice of "automatic promotion", which altogether indicate low levels of system efficiency and quality of learning. The Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) shows that repetitions still exist in spite of the policy of automatic promotion. In 2002, it states that about 700,000 pupils, that is 30% of who were P.1. This could be because they joined

¹¹ Esther Mukyala () Kampala: the New Vision newspaper

before the entry age requirement of 6 years was met or other reasons related to subject mastery and numeracy. This is still a big draw back to the UPE policy in Uganda.

Absenteeism: this is the persistent missing of school activities by both pupils and teachers. The ministry of education and sports (2004) present findings that 15% of pupils are absent, 8% because of clothing, 7% because of the lack of supplies e.g. books. 10% of Teachers are not always in classrooms sometimes because of proximity, weathers and non motivated teachers despite remuneration by the government. This normal running in the school, in regards to teaching and learning/syllabi coverage which negatively affects performance of pupils and UPE policy.

Supervision and monitoring of the implementation of UPE program is greatly challenged. The ministry official, district officials, inspector of schools, the local community like school management committee and the foundation body in most cases point finger at one another to supervise and monitor the activities in the schools. This is very sad especially for the school management committee and the PTA. In many instances, they fear or even fail to demand accountability from the school administration. The district officials and the school inspectors sometimes launch complains on lack of facilities and facilitations for the monitoring of activities in the schools. This has been even more critical in war ton areas like Gulu, Kitgum, Amuru and other districts destabilized by the LRA atrocities. In this regard, the school activities run unchecked with total autonomy of the Headteachers. This has often made policies to be wrongly implemented or not even implemented sionce they don't see any external check.

Uniformity of the curriculum: The fact that UPE pupils are examined by one central exanimation board, UNEB places a big challenge to the way the curriculum is designed. To a greater degree, curriculum in Uganda is centrally deigned which does not put into consideration the local needs of the pupils in a given area. This challenges the quality of education because the conditions in which people learn in Karamoja, Gulu, Kabale, and Kampala are very different. The level of exposures are also different this puts the less advantaged pupils at a risk to examination bias.

Of recent, there has been the implementation of Thematic Curriculum, teaching by themes and the local languages as medium of instruction. This again challenges the credibility of national

performance. Worst still, this has also left out some of the children whose mother tongues are not languages of wider communication or local languages, spoken and used for teaching in a school, many of which are speakers of the minority languages.

Retention cohort is still very low under the UPE: the number of pupils recruited in P.1 and the numbers of those pupils of that lot who reach P.7 are very low, here, a number of factors have been attributed to the tendency. Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) reports 43% of drop out rate per annum. This findings show that the retention and the survival rate is very low. UNICEF (2007) said that, *“completion and retention level are declining, it is now 59% entering primary at the right age and only 50% pupils made to secondary education”*. Others could be individual, financial and other may stem from uninteresting learning environment. Dropout level is still very high. The new vision of Thursday November 5th 2009 in page show that in Busia district, Tiira parish-Busitema sub county, parent have withdrawn over 500 pupils(their children) for school to go and work in the gold mines.

Decentralization: Universal Primary Education is implemented through a decentralized structure by the local government. The central government only provides required policies, guidelines and monitor performance. This is done with the assumption that the decentralization strengthens the ground implementation. This is a big challenge today because, some district, for example, Amuru district has been very ineffective in promoting primary education due to poor teacher recruitment policies, undue delay in the payment of teachers and corruption rock the district to the extend that money for the school facilitation is not released promptly as it should actually be.

Pupil teacher ratio remains a challenge to the implementation of UPE. In some cases teacher to pupils ration are very abnormal, for example, 1:90.this leaves the whole process of learning at the mercy of God. It is therefore implemented very haphazardly by the teachers. The Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) says that before the introduction of UPE, the teacher pupil’s ratio was 1:35 to 1: 60 in 1995. Today, more that 100 pupils are packed into one classroom, sitting on the floor due to the absence of desks, lacking reading and writing materials, and led by one harsh teacher; this is unbelievable but is a common scene in the in Northern Uganda. Otto (2006 p.24) affirms this fact by citing Bweyale primary school in Masindi district which has an

enrollment of approximately 2,598 students crammed in 17 classrooms, sharing 29 teachers. (Attached in the Appendix is a picture of how UPE enrollment expanded with unplanned mechanisms to absorb the shocking weight).

Disparities between rural and urban schools in provision of basic education facilities still persist in Uganda in spite of the UPE. Urban-Rural schools are artificially and unfairly given distinct opportunities which have created an imbalance in the education sector with better education for the urban rich and poor education for the rural poor. Due to the limited available resources in the National budget, regional and inter-school disparities has started to prevail in Uganda, that is the Rural and Urban schools as well as between rich and poor communities. Parents who are able and in towns pay some money to the schools which allow the schools to put in place better facilities for effective teaching and learning while those in the rural zones are restricted by the policy of UPE not to pay money to the school, this leaves the school at miserable situations without the capacity to undo its expenses for better teaching and learning. This ends up giving 'full' education to the rich and 'some' education to the poor which is very dangerous to our society.

Political interference of the UPE program has also great limited it from effectiveness forecasted during the policy formulation. Since it came with political motive/interest, it is growing with persistent checks of the political power. This limits its technical systematic implementations and also the program. In fact UPE right from its inception in Uganda was

Insecurity especially in northern Uganda has also given a big blow to UPE program, the expected output has not been so much realized in such an area because of the instability. That many explain why the northern region still has very high level of dropout, limited emphasis to girls' education as well as general access to education by majority of the children with difficulty of the technical supervisors to enforce policies related to UPE effectively. The people are currently being resettled and empowered to meet basic needs with the expectation that they will climb the ladder of education to catch up with the rest of the country.

Partial assessment: although the curriculum is well endowed with practical innovative concepts and ideas, its implementation is theoretically oriented and both the teachers and the pupil's emphasis were passing examination. The assessment method, therefore, becomes irrelevant in assessing and promoting adequate and integral development of the learner. It is mainly results oriented and other than focusing at the entire growth of the child as bloom taxonomy states; the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Besides, it is not very critical in evaluating the entire progress of the learners as informal education of indigenous Africa would do.

The disable children in most cases have been deprived of adequate education even in spite of the UPE. Here the school environments are not friendly to most of them, for example, no ramps, no gazette toilets for them, stigmatization/finger pointing, guidance and counseling or career guidance. Teachers are also not adequately trained to handle them. For example, sign language, and reading from the Braille. They may also have shortage of facilities like the Braille. This leaves the physically impaired lagging behind and demotivated.

Inadequate Physical Facilities and equipment: There has been serious government commitment and donor support, input ratios for textbooks, classrooms, chairs and desks suffered with the introduction of UPE. Although the Ministry of Education has embarked on a drive to build more schools and provide instructional materials and community based construction has also contributed to achieving much higher classroom numbers than centralized construction methods had, there is still congestion. In some areas, classes are conducted under mango trees. Most primary schools have inadequate facilities such as libraries and reading rooms (classrooms). Though a number of new schools have been built, they still inadequate to accommodate the increasing number of school children. Counterpart funds from the Local government are not released on time; hence six months infrastructure projects are usually completed after two years. Local government officials also divert some building materials meant for specific projects. There are still number of schools that need to be rehabilitated and the government has limited funding. Another constraint that Uganda faces in the implementation of primary education Policy is the lack of sufficient funding to build schools at the reach of every child of school going age and thus, the poorer localities are left out. In addition, progress is leaving girls and the poorest, including working children behind. Although

the government has declared free primary education in the government primary schools, these schools are not built in the poorest areas of the country and that means the gap between the rural and urban areas in terms of education opportunities continues to widen.

Inadequate financing of UPE is a big challenge today in implementing the policy. Good though it may appear the government's declaration of abolition of tuition fees yet it does not have enough funds was a big mistake and shock to the UPE. In spite of the government endeavors to fund UPE, other sectors are also competing in urgency. This makes the share of the national budget allotted for education fluctuating each financial year. Logically Universal primary education should not imply free education but affordable education to all. The able parents were stopped from contributing to the school expenditures. This made many things not to go on well since without money, educational service delivery is negatively affected. The New Vision Friday 18th September 2009 Quotes the secretary for education of Amuru district Mr. Olanya Gilbert saying that; *"the sh60, 000 to sh200, 000 government grant given per term was inadequate to run the schools."* This means that the Grants that the government gives are not adequate for running a school. Worst still the rural communities have been indoctrinated with the idea that UPE is free education; most of them are not willing to contribute even the bare minimum towards the school expenses and even in getting scholastic material for the children.

Corruption and embezzlement of UPE funds and misappropriation of funds meant to buy pedagogical materials and the delay of salaries of UPE teachers seriously impinge and underpin the implementation of UPE in Uganda today. Some corrupt officials and Headteachers divert funds for provision of educational services hence depriving people not only of their fundamental education rights but their basic needs as well. Many rural Headteacher, the scramble for UPE dollars overrides the concern of availing basic education to the citizenry.

The UPE has compromised quality of education in Uganda, here, the massive numbers of pupils enrolled without commensurate expansion of facilities, increased number of teachers, and adequate teaching and learning materials, the quality of education has been compromised. For instance, pupil-teacher ratio rose from 40: 1, Pre- UPE to 60: 1 in 1999, while pupil classroom ratio jumped from 85 to 145 over the same period. Though it has dramatically improved, the situation remains far from ideal. Again, although direct evidence on learning is scanty, the

available evidence gives cause for concern. For instance in tests administered to national random samples of primary three pupils, the number of pupils who achieved a satisfactory score declined from 48% from 1996 to 31% in 1999 on the mathematics test, and from 92% to 56% on the English oral test¹². This also partially explains why some pupils reach up to P.7 without knowing how to write their names. The over whelming number of learners makes teachers

Automatic promotion policy encouraged pupils to progress to the next class/standard annually so that there would be no repeating of classes. The reasons for automatic promotion were that repetition impairs the efficiency of education and lengthens the period which pupils take to reach the endpoint which hinders mass education. Repeating was also seen as lowering the self esteem of the learners. Coupled therefore with the other factors like few numbers of teachers to handle large classes, inability of many learners to masters literacy and numeracy skills, many teachers and parents shun automatic promotion, this made automatic promotion policy which was put in place only partially observed. Repetition rates at the primary level appear to have declined significantly for both boys and girls that is 17% before UPE and 9% after UPE. But the quality of the products are degenerating drastically, this is because, teachers are too few to handle large classes, remedial teaching to weak children is not very possible and instructional materials are not adequate. Children just go through education and schooling is like perpetual holiday. Senteza Kajubi (2002) said that Children do not get functional literacy, numeracy, communication skills and key values¹³.

Senteza Kajubi (2002) remarks that even the Jomtien world conference on education for all (1990) also agreed to emphasis access and achievement of learning that is relevant to the needs of the individual in his/her community. "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality"¹⁴ this implies that the general ethical aim of education is influencing the individual to develop physically, intellectually, socially and psychologically. Here, in the

¹² Kisubi, T. Alfred, (2008). *Critique and Analysis of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda in General and Suggestions for Improvement in Particular Local Areas*. Texas: University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. p. 9.

¹³ Senteza, K. W. (2002). *Bridging the Gab between Schooling and Education: Keynote Address*; The National Conference on Assessment in Primary Education by UNEB. p.7

¹⁴ Arajarvi, p. 1999. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A Common Standard of Achievement*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff publisher p.555

case of UPE and Uganda's education as whole, the development of the individual according to his/ her ability is not well balanced. The tendency to evaluate performance in terms of examinations results is very peculiar.

The data on drop out rates show similar trends for both boys and girls through grade 4. There are still some children who are yet to attend school for the first time. Some children also drop out of school. There is a troubling combination of causative factors. These include poverty, social problems, child labor (especially in the informal sector), and lack of schools and teachers in some rural areas.

The UPE program has been criticized for being short-sighted. There is no explanation as to what will happen to the ten thousands of children after primary level. For instance, The Ministry of Education and Sports (2009) states that in 2001, 360,000 pupils sat the Primary Leaving Examinations and only 250,000 qualified for Post Primary Automatic promotion Education. However, only 150,000 children were admitted into 734 government - aided secondary schools, 29 technical and farm schools. Therefore 100,000 pupils were not placed in any of the government schools. The program has become too expensive to run because the government is short of funds. The result is that donors have been approached for assistance. However, some of the donors often come with their conditions, which may not wholly be in the interest of the program. It has been observed that the scope of some of the intervention strategies by local and central government and some donor partners is limited to some selected schools in the various districts. In most cases funding is not available to expand and replicate the intervention to other schools. Here NGOs come in handy.

Attrition rate of teachers is yet another key factor to consider in the looking at the challenges of the UPE in Uganda. Many teachers leave the teaching in UPE Schools for greener pasture in private school and sometimes to other organizations like NGOs. It is estimated that every year 7% of teachers leave the UPE schools (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2004) especially in hard to reach areas like war zones and critical subjects.

Negative attitudes and consequent apathy: Another major challenge to implementation of UPE is the incapacity of primary stakeholders to support their children with school requirements.

Some parents are not providing their children with basic school needs such as uniforms, exercise books, Pens, pencils, shoes and bags. This case is even more serious in the case of the girl child. Some parents would not even pay levies for school improvement until their wards are sent home from school. This is a result of the misconception people have about the policy, having the view that the government must provide even uniforms and pen/pencils for their wards.

Inter-tribal wars, political instability and cultural attitudes are also among the main contributory obstacles to increase and retain school enrolment rates in some localities in the countries under study. This is clearly seen in northern Uganda. Here facilities are not adequate and personnel are not well located, for example, teachers. Ministry of Education and Sports (2004) unearth a sorrowful fact that in conflict areas of northern Uganda, one million (1,000,000) pupils were affected by war, this forced them to study from temporary learning center, many learners are traumatized and sometimes, they study under trees because of no proper structures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After examining the objectives, achievements and challenges in the implementation of UPE in Uganda, it is clear that there are still some actions to be taken by the various stakeholders in education like Local Governments, DEOs, School communities, Headteachers and others to optimally achieve the objectives of this education policy. Therefore, the following recommendations are to be considered:

A good preprimary education would be ideal for a solid base for children joining the UPE schools. This should be encouraged by the communities.

There is the need to realize that basic education goes beyond literacy. It should therefore embrace both vocational and life skills. There should be opportunities for UPE graduates to continue with studies although they may not enter the mainstream or formal educational system.

Initiatives for mass training and recruiting teachers should put in place to reduce the shortage in the number of teachers and also improve the pupil teacher ratio. This can be through expanding the capacities of the PTCs and NTCs and then adequately allotting them to areas of needs. The government should also improve on the pay of teachers so that the private schools may not take away most of the teachers.

There is the need for strong political commitment backed by strategic visions and policy frameworks for the education sector with input from the key Ministries, particularly the Ministries of Finance, Local Government, Public Service and Education. Primary education should be the focus of the governments' Poverty Reduction Strategy Programs (PRSPs) and supported by sound macro economic policies, which foster the expansion of the education system and increase funding for education, particularly UPE.

There should be the establishment of effective partnerships between governments and development partners (domestic and international) to help build a strong constituency for education. Governments should strengthen their collaboration with external financing agencies to provide significant financial support to create the resource base needed in the implementation of their Education Sector Investment Plans, if universal primary education/basic education is to become a reality by 2015 in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore, donor support to the program should be lobbied the government and also the local community since the government single handedly may not manage to effectively sponsor all UPE related programs. This could be local or international NGOs.

There should be increased advocacy and awareness creation by Civil Societies, policy makers, community leaders (district and local village heads). This should target community members and parents to fulfill their responsibilities towards meeting their children's educational needs.

Community members should be encouraged to form committees, which sometimes partially overlapped or linked with a similar body existing for health, nutrition and hygiene to promote synergy among key social services and enhance their total effectiveness Since the way governments and donors plan, budget and spend has a bearing in the realization of basic

education, there is need for both parties to realize that basic rights including education as a starting point in planning and budgeting processes. This entails strategies to provide sufficient schooling supplies e.g. books, uniforms and feeding to the children. This should cut across to all children. This requires that schools become genuinely accessible and that rights within the school-‘rights in education’ are realized, alongside the right to education. They should also encourage children to value education, put up innovative income generating projects for the schools (like tree planting or a small self help project for the school), they should visit the school frequently since they are the first inspectors. The communities should always attend and participate during meetings for school development, for example, PTA meetings or action oriented meetings.

Supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the UPE should be done adequately at the national level by the Ministry of Education and Sports and locally by the district education departments hand in hand with the local community members.

Teachers should realize that they are the key part of education engine therefore, their sporadic attendance should be checked, accommodation be provided near the school, they should employ interactive teaching-learning, put books in the hands of the learners, carry out guidance and counseling and uphold professional ethics.

Head teachers should have vision led administration with clear goals, objectives, mission and vision. They should have correct accounting in the school as well as supervising general activities in the school, for example, the teachers and curriculum implementation both co-curricular and traditional subjects implementation.

The teacher training colleges should also do their best to produce quality teachers who are self-motivated (*‘teachers by profession’*) other than the so-called *‘teachers by frustration’*. The Center Coordinating Tutors (CCTs) should also continue given technical and moral support to the teachers for better performance and delivery in the school, through having mentoring sessions and refresher courses.

CONCLUSION

The government's determination to adopt a holistic approach to the development of education within the framework of mobilizing all available resources-human, material, and financial is gradually yielding positive results. Poverty, which has been identified as a major barrier to education, is being addressed through multifaceted approaches like Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) NEPAD, UPPAP, and microfinance savings and credit societies are steadily leading Uganda to seek and provide an enabling environment that empowers citizens to participate fully in human development and wealth creation.

As I reflect on the UPE in Uganda, I have the assumption and hope that the central and local governments, in spite of severe economic constraints will remain committed to efforts aimed at putting in place an efficient, credible and sustainable education system that will make the nation competitive in today's globalize economy which is increasingly becoming knowledge-driven. This is because, I consider it the primary responsibility of all Ugandans realize that the right to education rests with national and local governments, which must make maximum efforts to realize the right to education progressively. However, there is also an international obligation at the level where governments operate collectively- through the UN system and the International Financial Institutions-since Universal Rights Declaration entail Universal Responsibilities.

Increasingly, civil society organizations working at the national level and international level through alliances, to build popular pressure on governments to realize the right to full education, the governments should respond to the campaigns by NGOs, community groups, unions, religious groups, and the private sector as they lobby for a new financial, planning and monitoring framework, to achieve the realization of the right education in Uganda.

My Academic Position

UPE as a policy was formulated under pressure of national politics and international interest pushed or driven. This has made its implementation very haphazard without a proper researched based and piloting. But all in all as a policy, UPE has helped very much in the promotion of basic education and related education spillover benefits to community of Uganda for a better society, economy building, innovative and relevant citizens for a self reliance and

sustainability in Uganda. If relevant modifications and recommendations made above are enacted, the face of the country through education would probably change for the better. For God and My Country.

Appendix

Picture 1: Shows how UPE was haphazardly implemented without considerations of expansion of education institutions with related factors so as to embrace the challenges Page 37.

Picture 2: Below, P.3 Pupils of Amuru primary school studying under a tree in March 2009 because few classrooms: (source: Pincer group international).



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