



Policy Paper

On

ACCESS, COST, QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

The case for Pre-primary and Primary Education in Uganda

“Building a Strong Human Capital Foundation”

By

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Abstract

From 1986, the education sector has witnessed comprehensive policy reforms that have put it decisively on the development path. Key among the reforms was the adoption of the most fundamental and far reaching programme - Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. The UPE made an immediate impact on at primary school enrolment level from 2.7 million (1996) to 8,485,005 (2014). Gross Enrolment Ratio improved from 128% in 2012 at 110% (2014); Net Enrolment Ratio improved from 92% (2012) to 93.7% (2014); new teachers recruited increased from 74,000 (1995) to 187,668 (2014) -including private and community schools. The number of public schools have increased from 12,500 (2000) to 22,600 (2014); classrooms increased from 68,000 in 2000 to 151,239 in 2014; Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) improved from 57:1 in 2010 to 54:1 in 2014

The above success notwithstanding, low quality of primary education remains the main challenge. Low quality is demonstrated by low learning achievement (*school outcomes*); literacy and numeracy proficiency at P.6 are below average at 40.15% and 41.40% in 2013 respectively. The efficiency of Uganda's primary education is low- Survival rate to P.7 stands at 32.1%, Repetition at 10.19% (2014) and teacher absenteeism is estimated at 20-30%. There is a persistent problem of "ghosts" (i.e. "ghost" schools, teachers, & learners), it estimated at over UGX 50 billion is lost annually due to ghosts. School inspection, monitoring and support supervision is inadequate and there is poor management of primary schools.

The challenge of poor quality is a general problem across the East African States with some states doing relatively better on some indicators than Uganda. For instance, the primary education completion rate is higher in Kenya at 81.8% (2013) and Rwanda at 69% (2013). Kenya also has relatively better transition rate at 76.6% compared to Uganda's 69.9 % (2013). Tanzania survival rates to P.7 (78.4%, 2013), is the highest in the sub-region.

At primary education level it is recommended that that interventions to address the quality challenges in primary education should focus on critical areas that include: teachers' development and management; Strengthen the inspection by centralizing the inspection function and making it independent; reconstitute the staffing establishment for the inspectorate departments at the district and national levels depending in the number of schools; full implementation of the scheme of service with a view to improving inspection at school level; provide teachers' accommodation starting with hard-to-reach and hard-to-stay areas to reduce absenteeism and increase motivation and retention; institutionalize school feeding programmes; and strengthening community participation.

At pre-primary education level however, both access and quality are low with enrolment currently standing at 7% implying a 93% gap. A weak policy framework, limited access and low quality

constitute three main concerns of pre-primary education in Uganda. Access to pre-primary education in the rest of the East African States is relatively better (Kenya 53.5%; Tanzania 35.5% and Rwanda 29%). In Kenya, pre-primary education is free and compulsory; in Tanzania each primary school has a pre-primary classroom; while in Rwanda, the Government is responsible for teacher training as well as curriculum development.

It is therefore recommended that at pre-primary level, government should: (i) take over critical functions like teacher training by integrating the training of pre-primary teachers into the Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs) curriculum development and policy formulation; (ii) Formulate and enforce national service delivery standards for pre-primary education and (iii) in areas that are least served by the private sector, government should attach a pre-school class for children aged 4-5. This will be budget neutral since they are already enrolled into the primary education system which is free and compulsory.

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1.0 Background

The Uganda Vision 2040 identifies human capital development as one of the key fundamentals that need to be strengthened to accelerate the country's transformation and harnessing of the demographic dividend. The availability of appropriate and adequate human capital facilitates increase in production, productivity and technological growth thus making it one of the key endogenous drivers of economic growth. It has been empirically tested that human capital lowers the elasticity of output with respect to labor when compared to the production function without human capital.

In this case, human capital is not accounted for as an input in the production function, but rather increases economic growth through its effect on total factor productivity. Human capital development thus plays a critical role in economic growth and development as it poses a positive growth impact on total factor productivity of the economy. However, education as a human right is the heart of sustainable development and it is important to the development of individuals and economies, as it helps to pave the way to a successful and productive future. Education is therefore a key element of human capital development because it is viewed as the primary means of developing knowledge and skill.

Formal education in Uganda owes its origins to the activities of Early Missionaries who came to Uganda prior to the inception of the British colonial rule in Uganda. Education was however, restricted to only small groups of people that mainly comprised children of the nobles, prominent families, tribal heads and the clergy. The education system was modeled on the British 7-4-2-3 tier. However, following attainment of independence in 1962 up to 1970, the post-colonial government prioritized the expansion and development of the education system to cater for the rapidly expanding number of school going age children. Education sector became increasingly central to manpower development in the country.

Throughout the 1970s, and early 1980s, education sector like other sectors of the economy collapsed. This period was characterized by inadequate physical infrastructure; instructional materials; qualified teachers which resulted into use of untrained personnel in the primary education system to over 40%; and under payment of teachers. Above all the strategic functions¹ of the sector was undermined. Consequently the quality of teachers deteriorated at all levels; only 50% of the school going-age children accessed primary education and approximately 10% had access to the other sub-sectors. This culminated into significant manpower gaps in the labour market.

¹ i.e. planning, budgeting, monitoring & evaluation; school inspection; curriculum development; assessment and general management.

From 1986, and throughout the past two and half decades, education sector witnessed comprehensive policy reforms that have put it decisively on the development path. The main thrust of these reforms are focused on establishing an enabling environment for reconstruction of the sector as well as its development geared towards enhancing equitable access across all the sub-sectors. The policy for the reform process has been mainly based on the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE, 1992) and the Poverty Eradication Action Plans (PEAPs, 1997 - 2009). These policy frameworks have been translated into action through the Education Sector Investment Plan (1998-2003), the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP: 2003-2018) and the National Development Plan I (NDPI, 2010 – 2015) and NDPII (2016-2020).

It is the government's pursuance of a coherent policy framework that resulted into the adoption of the most fundamental and far reaching programme - Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. The rapid growth in enrolment at primary school level from 2.7 million (1996) to 8.2 million (2009) and to 8,485,005 (2014) is singly attributed to the implementation of UPE. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) improved from 128% in 2012 at 110% (2014); Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) improved from 92% (2012) to 93.7% (2014); new teachers recruited increased from 74,000 (1995) to the current 187,668 (2014) -including private and community schools. The number of public schools have increased from 12,500 (2000) to 22,600 (2014); of classrooms have also grown from 68,000 in 2000 to 151,239 in 2014; Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) improved from 57:1 in 2010 to 54:1 in 2014. This surge in enrolment created further pressure among policy makers that led to the implementation of two other far reaching programmes Universal Secondary Education (USE 2007) and Universal Post O'Level Education and Training (UPOLET 2012) respectively. All these three programmes focus on expansion of access. At pre-primary education level however, both access and quality are low with enrolment currently standing at 7% implying a 93% gap.

Notwithstanding this monumental achievement in access, low quality of primary education remains the main challenge. Recent trends on virtually all the primary quality indicators are below the desired levels compared to other EAC states. Low quality is demonstrated by low learning achievement (*school outcomes*); literacy and numeracy proficiency at P.6 are below average at 40.15% (38.72boys; 40.10%) and 41.40% (45.80%; 37% girls) in 2013 respectively. In addition, the efficiency of Uganda's primary education is low- Survival rate to P.7 stands at 32.1%, Repetition at 10.19% (2014) and teacher absenteeism is estimated at 20-30%. There is a persistent problem of "ghosts" (i.e. "ghost" schools, teachers, & learners), which is responsible for substantial leakage of about UGX 50 billion (2.17% of the overall sector budget and 3.45% of the primary sub-sector budget. School inspection, monitoring and support supervision is inadequate and there is poor management of primary schools.

This paper presents the state of pre-primary and primary education in Uganda in terms of Policy Framework, Financing and key outcomes related to Access, Quality and Relevance at these levels. It then attempts a comparative analysis of the two sub-sectors within the East African Community

member States in order to identify key policy concerns that need to be addressed and recommendations.

2.0 Analysis of Key Issues

2.1 Pre-primary

A weak policy framework, limited access and low quality constitute three main concerns of pre-primary education in Uganda.

2.1.1 A Weak Policy Framework

The Pre-Primary, Primary and Post Primary Act (2008) recognizes pre-primary as the first level of education, and gives the Ministry of Education Science Technology and Sports oversight responsibility over it. Prior to its enactment, the Education sector had previously formulated an ECD policy which among other things underscored the cross-cutting nature of ECD and granted the mandate for its delivery to the Local Governments. However, there is no sector policy that specially addresses the provision of pre-primary education in the country. Under the circumstances, enrolment in pre-primary education is optional for the estimated over 6 million children (aged 3-5) and highly dependent on household income levels where these children hail from.

In addition, there is no framework for inspection and support supervision of pre-primary schools. This is contrary to the school inspection regulations that require that all education institutions be inspected to ensure compliance. This means that there are national service delivery standard for primary education. This leaves the provision of pre-primary education at the discretion of the providers.

2.1.2 Limited Access to pre-primary Education

In 2014, only 7% of Uganda' children of pre-primary school going age (3-5 years) were enrolled in pre-primary education. This means that for every 100 children of pre-school going age only 7 are enrolled. This translates into a gap of 93%, meaning over 5.5 million children do not attend pre-primary education.

This is compounded by the fact that the distribution of the existing pre-schools is skewed towards regions where households' incomes and urbanization levels are high. Regions where the household incomes are relatively high tend to attract providers of pre-primary education. This is based on the underlying assumption that households in such regions can afford the fees charged by these pre-schools. This has created fundamental inequality in the provision of pre-primary education since the majority of the children excluded from this service are from rural areas. Table 4.1 shows the regional distribution of pre-schools in the country.

Table 2. 1: Distribution of pre-primary schools by Region (2014)

Region	No. of Pre-primary Schools	Percentage (%)
Central	5,415	37%
Western	3,792	25.9%
Eastern	2,838	19.4%
Northern	2,586	17.7%

Source: EMIS 2014

The table indicates that the central region has the highest share of pre-schools owing to it relatively higher urbanization and households income levels.

Low access to pre-primary education is therefore, attributed to the following factors:

- The fact that the private sector (the main provider of pre-primary services in the country), only invests in areas of high economic potential where it can recoup its investments;
- Rapid expansion of the pre-primary school age population;
- The private-led pre-primary education service excludes the majority poor households (which constitute over 80% of the population) because the private sector charges high fees. There are no alternative and affordable delivery mechanisms for the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged children.

2.1.3 Low Quality of Pre-primary Education

Quality of pre-primary education is a multifaceted issue with dimensions that include among others; safety and adequacy of physical environment, teacher pedagogical and content knowledge, teacher education & training, and content of early learning programs. The quality of quality pre-primary in Uganda is very low. Poor quality of pre-primary education. This is manifested by:

- **Shortage of Qualified pre-primary school teachers:** Most of the pre-school teachers are Senior Four and P.7 dropout and some have no prior training pre-school pedagogy. The majority of qualified pre-school teachers (mainly trained by YWCA and YMCA) are usually recruited by elite pre-schools located in the major urban centers (particularly Kampala).
- **Poor quality of Infrastructure:** Given the fact that pre-primary education provision in the country is private sector-led, infrastructure development is exclusively undertaken by the private sector and the community. Majority of the pre-primary school proprietors lack adequate financial strength to put up permanent and customized structures for pre-primary schools especially in rural areas. Any good Infrastructure development initiatives undertaken in pre-primary school are mainly located in high growth centers. Consequently, infrastructure remains very inadequate and a big challenge across the country.

- **Inadequate and inappropriate Learning Materials.** Quality pre-primary education depends on availability of adequate, appropriate and relevant learning materials. Although the Learning Framework specified the kind of learning materials for pre-schools, most of the materials are not available. As a result, only “high-class” pre-schools access these materials, the rest have ended up using improvised (and most times) primary education instructional materials instead.
- **Poor Regulation and Coordination of Schools Inspection and Supervision:** the regulatory framework for pre-primary education is almost nonexistent. What exist are guidelines that have been developed overtime for the broad ECD rather than pre-primary education. Lack of an inspection framework also means that pre-primary schools are usually not inspected as required. The only resources presently devoted for pre-primary within the MoESTS are from Education Development Partners and are for development of curriculum implementation guidelines.
- **Lack of pre-primary teachers training institutions:** The Country has no institutionalized training institutions for pre-primary teachers. Privately owned Institutions like Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), which are the cadres for training of nursery teachers, were not originally established as pre-primary Teacher Training Colleges. Besides, these centers lack trained tutors for training of pre-primary school teacher. Consequently the present cadre of pre-primary teachers grossly lack the required pedagogy for teaching at this level.

2.2 Primary Education

Quite evidently, Uganda has made enormous progress in improving access to primary education. Since 1997, GoU has succeeded in raising the access to primary education from 2.8 million (1996) to 8.5 million (2014). Considerable numbers of new teachers have been recruited from 74,000 (1995) to the current 187,668 (2014) (including private and community schools). The number of schools have increased from 12,500 (2000) to 22,600 (2014). The number of classrooms have also grown from 68,000 in 2000 to 151,239 in 2006.

While the stakeholders in education sector are generally satisfied with the progress made in expanding access to this level, the key concern now is over its low quality.

2.2.1 Poor Quality of Primary Education

Poor quality of primary education manifests itself a number of ways including low learning outcomes (particularly numeracy and literacy), low efficiency, the role of teachers and school management.

(i) Low Learning Achievements in Primary Education

The percentage of P.6 pupils rated proficient in numeracy and literacy was 40.15% and 41.4% (2014) respectively. This implies that more than a half of the pupils enrolled in P.6 can neither count nor read and write simple sentences.

Inadequate number of qualified Teachers in government aided primary schools. The issue of teachers is so critical because teachers play a pivotal role in improving the quality of primary education service delivery. In 2014 total enrolment in government aided schools stood at 7,124,124; the number of teachers on government payroll 131,310. This translates into a Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) of 54:1. The target PTR is 45:1 this gives an estimated qualified teacher gap of 27,003 in government schools alone. High pupil teacher ratios lead to higher dropout rates and have a negative effect on learning achievement.

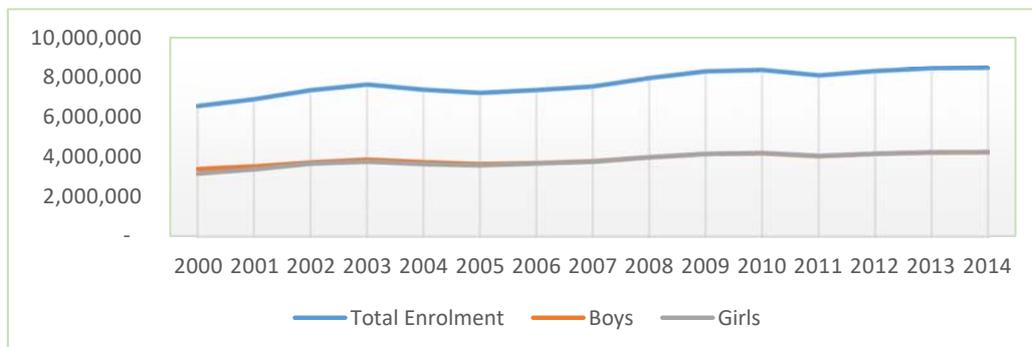
(ii) Inadequate School Facilities

In 2014, the Pupil Classroom Ratio (PCR) for government aided schools was 69:1 (since total classroom stock was 103,168 while total enrolment was 7,124,124. Given that the target PCR is 45:1, this implies that there is a classroom shortage of 55,145. In 2014, total enrolment in primary education was 8,485,005 (i.e. 4,235,669 boys; 4,249,336 girls), while GIR and NIR stood at 133.8% and 58.5% in 2014 respectively. In the same period, the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) were 93.7% and 110% respectively. The 110% NER in 2014, implies that formal schooling in primary cycle includes many children older than 12 years as well as some as young than 6 years. In terms of infrastructure, in 2014, the number of Government primary schools stood at 12,203 while classroom stock was at 103,186.

(iii) Limited Access to Pre-primary Education

As already stated, only 7% of the children aged 3-5 years have access to pre-primary education. This means that a majority of Uganda's children (93%, 2014) are excluded from pre-primary education with the result that they have a wrong start with primary education (i.e. there are not ready for primary education). These children are the ones who mainly repeat or dropout of primary school (particularly during the transition from P.1 to P.2 and P.6 to P.7). Improving access to pre-primary education is therefore, a strategy for enhancing the efficiency of primary education.

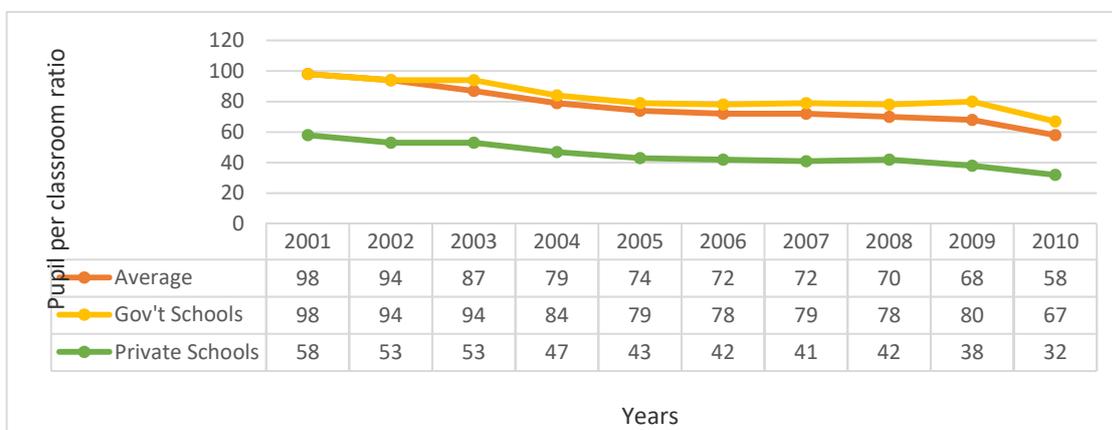
Figure 2.1 Trends in enrolment in Primary Education from 200 – 2014.



Source: EMIS, 2014

The increase in enrolment is not matched by a corresponding increase in pupil classroom ratio in primary education in 2001 was 98:1 overall with 98 pupils in government aided schools and 58 in privately run schools. This improved to 58:1 (67:1 government aided and 32:1 privately owned) in 2010, as reflected in the figure below1.2

Figure1.2: Pupil Classroom ratio in primary schools 2001-2010



Source: EMIS, 2014

2.2.2 Low efficiency

Low efficiency in primary education is manifested by a larger number of factors that include among others high Head-teacher and Teacher Absenteeism; high Pupil Absenteeism, dropout and repetition, large proportion of out-of-school children, low teacher Utilization rates; Dysfunctional

District Service Commissions, and high Teacher attrition rates, limited Access to Pre-primary education and institutionalised phenomenon of “ghost” (i.e. “ghosts”0 school, teachers and learners).

(i) Head-teacher, and Teacher Absenteeism (*the role of teachers*)

High Head teacher and teachers absenteeism poses a serious problem to the efficiency of primary education. Available evident indicate that other average headteachers are estimated to be absent for at least 3 days a week.

Teacher absenteeism is also very rampant in Uganda and is currently estimated at 20-30%. On the average, a primary teachers is estimated to be absent for at least 2 days a week. This implies that 20%-30% of the wage bill is spent on services that are not delivered. The problem seems to be greatest in the country’s northern and eastern districts and more serious in rural areas than in urban areas. Teacher absenteeism has a highly negative impact on learning achievement because low attendance rates of teachers reduce effective contact time (*which is key factors in improving the quality of education*). One of the main reasons advanced for high teacher absenteeism is low teacher motivation which is attributed to factors that include lack of teacher’s houses and career development opportunities; as well as the perceived low salary.

(ii) Pupil Absenteeism, dropout and repetition

Absenteeism, dropout and repetition are significant problems in primary education. The absence of pupils is highly correlated with the absence of teachers. High pupil absenteeism is attributed to domestic work, market days, late reporting and withdrawal to participate in agricultural activities (particularly planting and harvest seasons).pupil absence is therefore, in the control of parents/households.

Primary schools experience high dropout rate. Dropout is highly correlated with pupil absenteeism. Although dropouts occurs across the primary school cycle, the highest rates occur during transition from **P.1 to P.2**, and from **P.6 to P.7**. High dropout rates results into low survival and completion rates for primary school education currently at estimated at 33%. The main factor that accounts for high dropout is lack of interest by leaners (43%). This implies that the current school environment is not very interesting to the majority of pupils (*probably as a result of high pupil teacher ratios and poor teaching methodologies*). Other causes of dropout are mainly social and these include teenage pregnancy, early marriages, and child labour and poor sanitation facilities (particularly for girls). The majority of other factors lie outside the direct influence of the school and education policy (*but with communities and households*).

Repetition is also still high in primary education. In 2014, repetition rate was estimated at 10.19%. Repetition is negatively correlated with dropout at the school level. Schools with high pupil teacher

ratios tend to have relatively low repetition rates but high dropout rates. Repetition is expensive and leads to higher pupil teacher ratios. Repetition and dropout are especially high at P.1. This is attributed to inadequacy of pre-primary education facilities. Repetition rates are high in schools in the north, east and west in that order. A high number of repeaters in P.6 suggests that many parents prefer their children to repeat in order to improve their chances for performing better at the PLE.

(iii) Low survival rates (Cohort Completion Rate)

Survival Rates (*which analyse the survival a particular cohort across the primary cycle*) are very low, currently estimated at 33%. This is attributed to hog repletion and dropout. Table 2.Below shows the survival rates for the last five years.

Table 2. 2: Survival Rate to P.7 (2003-2014)



Source: EMIS 2014

(iv) Out-of-school children

Out-of-school children are those children of the official primary school age range who are not enrolled in school. The proportion of out-of-school children was 8.5% or 700,588 children (UDHS 2011), with girls accounting for more than half of these out-of-school children. Some of the main factors accounting for out-of school children is high dropout and household poverty.

(v) Teacher Deployment/Utilization

Another key efficiency problem of primary education is poor utilization of its teaching staff which compounds the problem of the shortage of qualified teachers. The utilization is determined by the deployment (by the districts) and the teacher's time on task.

The coherence co-efficiency of primary school teacher deployment in Uganda is estimated at 0.65, implying that 35% of primary school teachers in Uganda are randomly distributed to school rather than basing distribution on Pupil Teacher Ratio. There are many cases where Districts and schools with similar pupil's enrolment have different number of teachers (i.e. some have more teachers than required and some having less). All across the country a fair and even deployment of primary teachers has never been achieved even when teacher deployment was centralized. Uneven deployment of teachers was actually one of the reasons that led to advocating for decentralised primary school teacher management. However, decentralization seems to have failed to solve the problem or even made it worse.

Furthermore, teachers' time on task is very low. Prevalent teacher, headmaster, and student absenteeism is responsible for this. Low teachers contact time contributes to the low quality education at the school level.

(vi) Ineffective District Service Commissions

The recruitment of primary teachers is a decentralized service and is the responsibility of the District Service Commission (DSCs). However, most recently created Districts do not have functional District Service Committees (meaning *additional teachers cannot be recruited*). This contributes to high pupil's teacher ratio which undermine efficiency.

(vii) Teacher attrition

There is growing primary school teacher attrition problem. The teacher annual attrition rate is currently estimated at 4%. The major causes for primary teacher attrition include; resignation, retirement, death, and prolonged illness (mainly due to HIV/AIDS). Teacher attrition increases PTR leading overcrowding in classrooms. Instead recruiting additional teachers most of the effort is expanded on replacing those that have left the sector.

2.2.3 School Inspection, Monitoring and Support Supervision

Due to a combination of factors (*that include narrow staff establishment at both national and district levels; limited budgetary resources; and overlapping mandates between national and district inspectorates*), school inspection monitoring and support supervision functions are inadequately carried out. The current scope of the monitoring and evaluation functions remains limited (*instead of being instruments for the improvement of the quality of education*). Due to limited investment (mainly by donors), the Education Management information System (EMIS), is currently limited to the collection of collection of basic statistics (*i.e. statistics on school enrolment, teachers classrooms etc.*), rather than being a tool for management as it was originally

conceptualized. School inspection is weakest at Local Government levels (due *inadequate staff, skills and budget*).

2.2.4 High Population Growth Rates

Uganda has high population growth rate estimated at 3.0 % (UBOS, 2014). Rapid population growth is increasingly putting pressure on the existing resources and facilities. This makes the achievement of quality primary education a moving target.

2.2.5 Budgetary Constraints

The allocation to the Education Sector may be seen to be increasing in nominal terms. However, putting into consideration the inflation rate and also the incremental enrolment rates (*due to high population growth*), the allocation to the Education Sector has been actually declining in real terms. An analysis of the allocation trend to the Education Sector shows a steady decline from 16.85%, 15%, 14.61, and 13.65% over the last 4 financial years (i.e. FYs 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 respectively).

Furthermore, the wage bill has remained relatively stagnant meaning that massive recruitment of teachers cannot be done despite the existence of staffing gaps. The efforts to enhance teachers' salaries exacerbate the problem thereby creating little impact. This is because teachers' salaries are affected by negative developments in the money and commodity markets as well as the relatively static wage-budget. Table 1.3 below highlights the UPE Cumulative Budget Shortfall and Pupil Equivalent (FY 2002/3 -2011/12).

Table 2. 3: UPE Cumulative Budget Shortfall and Pupil Equivalent (FY 2002/3 -2012/13)

	FY 02/0 3	FY 03/04	FY 04/05	FY 05/06	FY 06/07	FY 07/08	FY 08/09	FY 09/10	FY 10/11	FY 11/1 2	Cu mm Tota l
Required UPE Budget (Bn.shs)	46.03	47.85	47	46.27	46.7	47.4	48.1	50.3	50.2	49.26	479.11
Approved UPE Budget (Bn.shs)	41.53	41.53	33.5	33.49	32.8	33.5	41.01	41.01	41.01	44.78	384.16
Actual UPE Release(Bn.shs)	40.34	39.51	31.8	32.5	30.8	30.3	38.96	38.96	41.01	43.4	367.58

Shortfall	5.69	8.34	15.2	13.77	15.9	17.1	9.14	11.34	9.19	5.86	111.53
Pupil equivalent of the Budget shortfall	812,857	1,191,429	2,171,429	1,967,143	2,271,429	2,442,857	1,305,714	1,620,000	1,312,857	837,143	15,932,857

Source: EMIS 2014

2.2.6 School Management

Primary School management is poor. This is attributed to factors that include rampant headteachers absenteeism, inadequate school supervision, dysfunctional School Management Committees limited community participation in school activities and inadequate orientation and in-service training. Available evidence indicates that well-managed schools perform better and investing in the quality of management is a relatively cheap strategy for improving school outcomes. A better school management leads to higher pupil and teacher attendance, better-motivated teachers, better management of resources and a better school climate. As a result, pupils perform better. Further evidence indicates that private schools in Uganda perform better than public schools mainly on account of relatively good school management.

Good school management is therefore, not only critical for improvement of schools outcomes but also as a cost effective strategy for reducing teacher absenteeism as well.

2.2.7 Limited Community Participation

Technically the communities are expected to be the true owners of schools and therefore are expected to take keen interest then in terms of monitoring school activities and participating in their development. Unfortunately community participation in primary school activities in Uganda has drastically declined since the launch of UPE. Most communities (*particularly in the rural areas*) have abdicated this responsibility to Government on account of a misconception that being a publicly funded program, only government is responsible for its implementation and outcomes. However, evidence from several studies in Uganda suggests that low community participation is one of the major impediment to the realization of quality primary education in the country and needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

2.2.8 Un-institutionalized School Feeding Programmes

School Feeding Programmes are usually undertaken as a strategy to increase access and participation of children in primary education. Available evidence suggests that stabilizing food availability in primary school stimulates increased enrolments and school attendance rates and

thereby, reducing absenteeism. Food availability in schools also reduces malnutrition which is a predisposing factor for stunting (*which is responsible for mental and physical retardation that impair normal growth and cognitive development of children*). The UPE policy gives the responsibility of feeding children to the parents. This policy has not been generally successful in meeting its objective. The rampant pupil absenteeism in the country is partly attributed to lack of institutionalized school feeding program. Areas like Karamoja sub-region (*which frequently experience periodic droughts leading to rampant food shortages*) have one of the lowest enrolment and attendance rates in the country.

Absence of school feeding programs in schools thus affects the ability of children to engage effectively in the teaching and learning process and thereby, hampering the achievement of desired school outcomes. It also exacerbates the problem of school dropouts.

2.2.9 The Institutionalized Phenomenon of “Ghosts” Schools, Teachers and Learners

The Education & Sports sector is one of the sectors that continue to receive one of the largest shares of the GoU budget. However, leakages attributed to the existence of “ghosts” are undermining the efficient use of these resources. Various study findings indeed confirm that Ghost Teachers, Schools and Pupils exist and persist within the Education and Sports Sector. This phenomenon is costing government unwarranted loss currently estimated billions of shillings annually which is paid out in terms of fake Capitation grants, School Facilities Grant, Teachers’ Salaries and Instructional Materials. Furthermore, the problem of ghosts has undermined the credibility of official MoES statistics which often creates serious controversy in the public and disagreements with Ministries of Finance, Planning & Economic Development (MoFPED), Public service and district local Governments regarding the actual numbers of beneficiaries at different levels of the education system.

The situation is exacerbated by the existence of parallel data systems within the sector which not only duplicate each other but also lead to an increase in transactional costs as a result of involvement of different levels of education system in data collection activities as well as operations and maintenance of multiple data systems. Both MoFPED and MoES are in agreement that the problem of “ghosts” remains real in the Education Sector and requires a multi-sectoral approach to address it.

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

3.1.1 Pre-Primary Education

Despite the pre-primary, primary and post primary Act 2008 (*that established pre-primary as the 1st level of education*), the importance attached to pre-primary education in Uganda is still limited. Consequently, access to this level of education is extremely limited (*at only 7%*), and its quality is very poor. This state of affairs is attributed to the decision to allow the private sector to spearhead this sub-sector, which resulted into weak policy framework and absence of service delivery standards.

Access to pre-primary education in the rest of the East African States is relatively better. For instance, in Kenya it is the highest at 53.5%; Tanzania it is at 35.5% and Rwanda at 29%. In Kenya, pre-primary education is free and compulsory; in Tanzania each primary school has a pre-primary classroom (*financed out of capitation grants provided to primary schools*); while in Rwanda, the Government has established and enforced national standards (*which define the objectives for the sub-sector*), and is responsible for teacher training as well as curriculum development.

3.1.2 Primary Education

With regard primary education, the paper contends that Uganda has done commendably well in expanding access. Both the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) are high at 110% and 93.7% (2014) respectively.

Notwithstanding this monumental achievement, low quality is now the main challenge. Recent trends on virtually all the primary quality indicators are below the desired levels. Low quality is demonstrated by low learning achievement (*school outcomes*); literacy and numeracy proficiency at P.6 are below average at 40.15% (38.72boys; 40.10%) and 41.40% (45.80%; 37% girls) in 2013 respectively. In addition, the efficiency of Uganda's primary education is low- Survival rate to P.7 stands at 32.1%, Repetition at 10.19% (2014) and teacher absenteeism is estimated at 20-30%. There is a persistent problem of "ghosts" (i.e. "ghost" schools, teachers, & learners), which is responsible for substantial leakage of budgetary resources (annually estimated at over UGX.50 billion shillings). School inspection, monitoring and support supervision is inadequate and there is poor management of primary schools.

The above challenges are exacerbated by a number of factors that include:

- High population growth;
- Budgetary constraints; and,
- Limited community participation.

The challenge of poor quality is a general problem across the East African States with some states doing relatively better on some indicators than Uganda. For instance, the primary education completion rate is higher in Kenya at 81.8% (2013) and Rwanda at 69% (2013). Kenya also has relatively better transition rate at 76.6% compared to Uganda's 69.9 % (2013). Tanzania survival rates to P.7 (*which stood at 78.4%, 2013*), is the highest in the sub-region.

3.2 Recommendations

3.2.1 Pre-primary

- (i) Government should increase its involvement in the delivery of pre-primary education:**
Available evidence suggests that pre-primary is critical as a foundation for quality education. This could be realised by attaching a pre-primary class to government aided primary schools. There are already a large number of UPE schools across the country admitting under age children to P.1. This implies that there is a significant number of households that already demand pre-primary education services but are limited by poor supply. Passing a policy to attach a nursery section to every UPE school should constitute the first step towards free pre-primary schooling. Pre-schools should however, be kept semi-autonomous (in terms of management and operations) to ensure a conducive environment for young children.
- (ii) Formulate and enforce national service delivery standards for pre-primary education:**
This will facilitate effective management and coordination of the sub-sector as well as enhance quality of services provided.
- (iii) Integrate the training of pre-primary teachers into the Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs).**

3.2.2 Primary Education

This study recommends that interventions to address the quality challenges in primary education should focus on the following critical areas:

- (i) Strengthen the inspection by centralizing the inspection function and making it independent
- (ii) Reconstitute the staffing establishment for the inspectorate departments at the district and national levels depending in the number of schools
- (iii) Full implementation of the scheme of service with a view to improving inspection at school level
- (iv) Provide teachers' accommodation starting with hard-to-reach and hard-to-stay areas to reduce absenteeism and increase motivation and retention
- (v) Institutionalize school feeding programme
- (vi) Strengthening community participation

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