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# Education in Uganda

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## Introduction.

Uganda is a country with a current population of 37.58, situated in the north and south of the equator on an area of 24,139km<sup>2</sup> with a tropical climate of between 17o c – 28oc and completely land locked. It's outlet to the Indian Ocean, is through the Kenyan port of Mombasa. The country shares boarders in the east with Kenyan, in west with Democratic Republic of Congo, in South with Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi in the southeast and South Sudan in the north. Nearly 45 indigenous languages are spoken which are clustered in to the Bantu, the Luo, the central Sudanic and the Kuliak (Austin, 2010). Currently the country is divided into 112 administrative districts and Kampala is the capital city located in the central with the educational headquarters.

## Historical development of Education in Uganda

According to Ssekamwa & Lugumba, (2001), in Uganda education of children was informal done in homes and the community. The instruction was vocational and practical with core elements in survival techniques at that time. The Curriculum emphasized skills in hunting, leadership, Marriage, apprenticeship, farming, local herbal medicine, fishing, hunting, fruit gathering, art and craft like weaving baskets, mats, back cloth making, blacksmith, cultural rites for various age groups and occurrences such as death and famine. However in 1880's the formal education was introduced by the British colonial Christian missionaries which replaced the informal type of education. They set up educational centers in the various regions of the country and the target was to introduce skills in writing, reading and counting. The formal education of the time, was religious based which created divisionism in the local

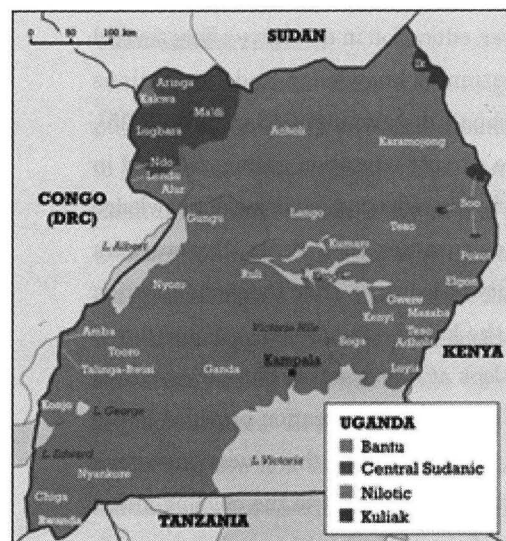
## MAP SHOWING MULTILINGUALISM IN UGANDA

There are about 40 indigenous languages.

The languages are clustered into:

1. The 'Bantu'
2. The 'Luo'
3. The Central Sudanic,
4. The Nilotic
5. The Kuliak speakers.

Swahili is an East African regional language and a third language taught in school.



communities among catholics, protestants and later Islam which was introduced by the Arabs who came as businessmen.

During the colonial period, formal education was discriminative in that it was first given to the clergy, the chiefs and their children and the poor were ignored. This created another social classification in society. The education expanded as demand for civil savants increased in the local government. In 1925 the colonial government set up a department of education in an effort to centralize and monitor funding to education. Before the establishment of this department four commissions had been in charge of education issues in the country which included, Phelps –Stokes Commission, Education Ordinance of 1924, the colonial office Advisory Committee, Advisory Committee on African Education and they were all put in place to iron out the differences among the missionary groups that were providing education in the country. About the same time post primary technical schools were set up, and their graduates were teachers, clerks and office messengers of various cadres. In 1962 when Uganda gained independence, the castle commission was set up in 1963 to set educational policies. The commission argued for raising standards in agriculture, technical education, expansion of girls' education, and provision of adult education. Since 1963, education policy in Uganda was mainly guided by the Castle commission report up to the inception of the 1992 Government white paper (Ministry of Education and Sports Uganda 2014).

### **Problem statement.**

World over, education in a country offers several benefits like creation of knowledge and innovations which can spearhead development (Sempala 2005). Unfortunately, the current education system followed in Uganda is relatively low reflecting provision of knowledge with little emphasis on practical skills (Byamugisha 2010). The majority of learners after their qualification they fail to apply the knowledge and skills acquired into practice and they look at it as wastage of time yet others have questioned the quality of education provided in the country. Currently it appears like the education system followed in Uganda is not relevant to the ongoing global Job market. Many of our graduates have ended up as Job

seekers rather than Job creators. One wonders why it has continued to exist, when a lot of resources are spent on education by the government of Uganda. Is it because of educational managers who cannot plan, manage, select and design relevant educational curriculum? Why is it that students from developed countries like Japan are more innovative, creative and fit in the job market that students in Uganda fail to achieve? Given the above background it is of particular interest to address the above problem for Uganda.

The study intend to investigate the following research questions.

- What is the current educational structure in Uganda?
- What are the current issues in the education system of Uganda?

### **Objective of the study.**

The study aim to investigate the current education system in Uganda. Specifically the first objective of the study will be to examine the current educational structure and the second objective will be to examine the current issues in the education system.

### **Significance of the study.**

The qualitative improvement of Ugandan education system is still a questionable issue as attested with high unemployment rates, although the quantitative expansion in pupil's enrolment has been impressive since the implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE). One of the reasons for slow improvement is seen in policy shortage that is helpful in the transformation of the education system. Based on that shortage, the study will investigate the education system with focus on the structure and the current issues affecting education in Uganda while contributing to the body of knowledge on educational effectiveness. The result of the study will be useful to The Ministry of Education (MoES) in Ugandan and non-governmental organisations involved in educational development as the result can serve as guide in designing interventions intended to improve on the education system in Uganda.

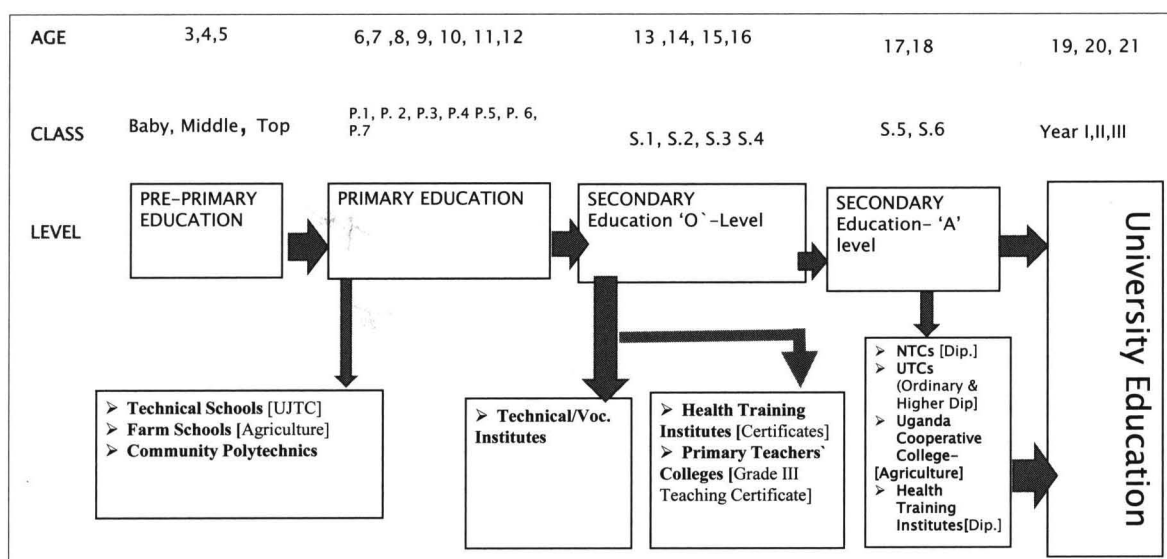


Figure 1. Shows the present organization of the school system in Uganda

Adapted from the website of the ministry of Education, Science, technology and sports Uganda (2015). From the figure above the major curriculum practiced at each level of education are discussed as below.

## Literature Review

### The structure of Education system in Uganda.

Ministry of Education Uganda (MoES, 2015) states, the school year start in February and finishes in December. The first term runs from February to mid-April followed by a short break of two weeks then the second term resumes from Mid-May until early August followed by a three weeks break and they resume for third term which runs from early September to mid-December followed by a two month vacation. Uganda's education system has a structure of 7-4-2-3 years of education and the medium of instruction is by use of English language at all levels though, of recent they introduced a thematic curriculum which permit learners to study in their mother language from primary one up to primary three.

### Pre-primary education

This level of education is not compulsory and is purely private meant for children aged 3-5. The curriculum content rotate a round, play, habits and language development. The classes at this level of education start at 8:00am -13:00pm. However, some schools go up to evening to cater for the children of the working mothers. The teacher pupil ratio is 52:1 (Uganda White Paper 1992).

### Primary education

MoES (2015), emphasised that, this level of education is compulsory and provides education to pupils aged 6-12. The Curriculum practiced at this level, aims at enabling learners to develop competences and life skills for lifelong learning. It emphasises the importance of literacy, numeracy, language development, values, attitudes, cross-cutting issues and continuous assessment. The curriculum advocates for the use of friendly child-centred methods and approaches where learners participate in their learning activities in order to make reasonable learning achievements as well as enabling them to acquire self-confidence and meet the demands of life. The Curriculum at this level of education is presented in three cycles, namely:-

#### Thematic curriculum

This curriculum was designed for P.1- P.3 pupils. The content is arranged around themes familiar to learners like human body, school, home, health and the medium of instruction is by use of local languages (mother tongue). This was a brilliant idea though the major challenge is that many of the local languages are not yet developed in that they are spoken with no written literature posing a threat in the thematic curriculum implementation. In addition, learners and teachers are advised to use non textbook materials and learning is continuously assessed. There twelve themes per class.

**Transition curriculum**

Basing on the Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC 2015), this curriculum was designed for learners who have reached P.4. The curriculum provides for transition from thematic to subject based learning. The emphasis is on use of local languages to gradual use of English as a medium of instruction. For example in term 1 teachers use local languages and English, in term 2 local languages is minimised and in term 3 the medium of instruction is purely English. The subjects offered include English language, mathematics, science and social studies, religious education, creative art, physical education and local languages. At this level the lesson last for 40 minutes.

**Upper primary curriculum.**

This curriculum was put in place for pupils from p.5 - p.7 and is purely subject based curriculum.The

curriculum at Upper Primary (P5-P7) is spiral in design, based on identifiable and transferable skills and competences which are specified for each subject. The focus is to keep the content appropriate to the level. The subjects offered include: - English language, mathematics, integrated science, social studies, religious education, creative Art, physical education and local languages. The classroom size vary depending on the location of the school.

**General enrolment at primary level.**

Education management information system in Uganda (EMIS 2013), indicated that, as a result of many interventions undertaken to expand access and equity in primary education like Universal Primary Education (UPE), the sector registered an increase in total enrolment in primary from 356,903 (176,857 boys; 180,046 girls) in 2012, to 416,453(207,207boys; 209,246 girls) in 2013 as illustrated in figure 2 below.

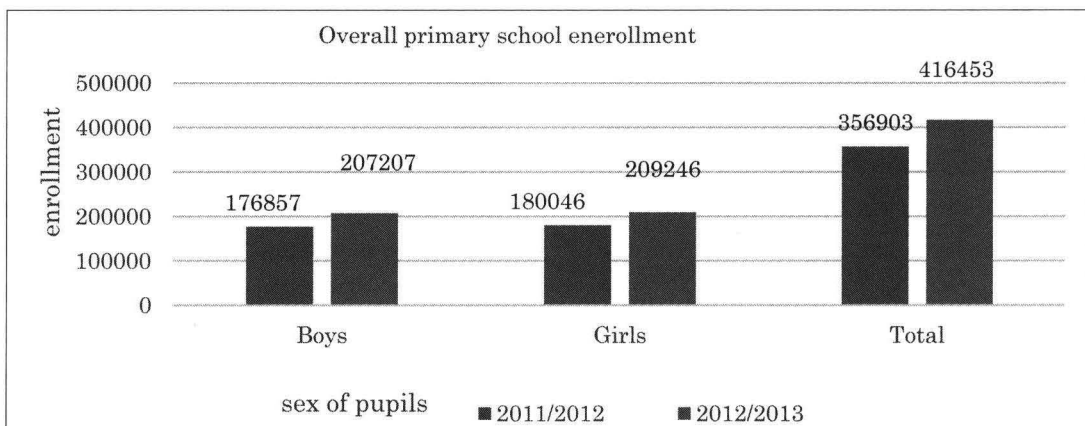


Figure2: overall primary school enrolment 2011/2012 and 2012/2013.

**Completion Rate for primary level.**

Basing on EMIS (2014), From figure 3, Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB 2014) pointed out

that, primary Completion Rate declined by 3.6 points from 71% (boys 71%; Girls71%), in 2013 to 67.4% (boys 67.8%; girls 66.9%) in 2014. This persistent decline in

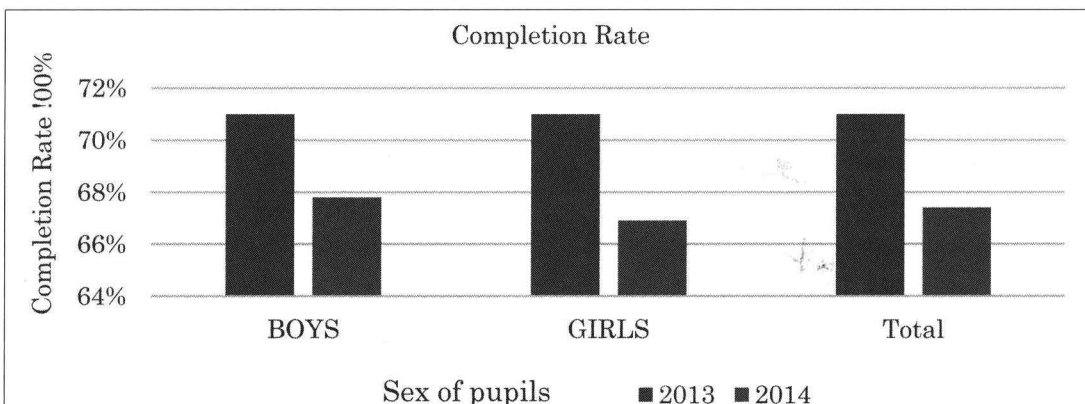


Figure3: overall primary school Completion Rate (2013-2014)

primary completion Rate was attributed to factors that include among others; married early, death, grade repetition and teenage pregnancies (EMIS Uganda 2014).

**Secondary Education**

Secondary Education in Uganda spans from S1 to S6. It is one of the options for forward progression under Uganda's education system. Secondary education is divided into two cycles indicated below:

**Secondary Education- Ordinary level**

Ordinary level is one of the formal education options for learners who have completed primary education. Learners join senior one having successfully passed the Primary Leaving Examinations and embark on a 4-year cycle covering the Lower Secondary or O' level (Senior 1 - Senior 4). This level caters for children between the ages of 13-16 (Republic of Uganda, MOES 2006). At this level children take a wide variety of subjects and examinations are administered at end of every term to determine the students' performance and at the end of Senior 4 "O-Level" they sit for final Uganda National Certificate of Education (UCE).

Even though Physical Education is taught in all schools, is one of the subjects which are not examined by UNEB at the end of cycle. The department that caters for the disadvantaged children is in place but Ugandan

schools have not yet embraced the idea of admitting learners with various disabilities at all levels of education and they lack qualified personnel's to handle learners with various special needs in schools at all levels (NCDC 2015).

**Secondary Education – ‘A’ Level**

The two year Higher Secondary Education cycle referred to as Advanced Secondary level of education leads to the award of the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE). To enter into secondary advanced level one must have passed the Uganda Certificate of Education. The curriculum is offered as a set of specialized subject combinations. A learner offers a combination of three Principal subjects and two subsidiary subjects.

**Enrollment Rate for secondary level**

Figure4 indicates that, at secondary level, total enrolment in secondary schools was 1,362,739 (727,212 boys; 635,527girls) in 2013 and 1,374,546 (i.e. 709,140 boys; 665,406 girls) in 2014. The Increase in enrolment at secondary level was attributed to continuous implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE) program and the use of Public Private Partnership (PPP) strategy in USE program.

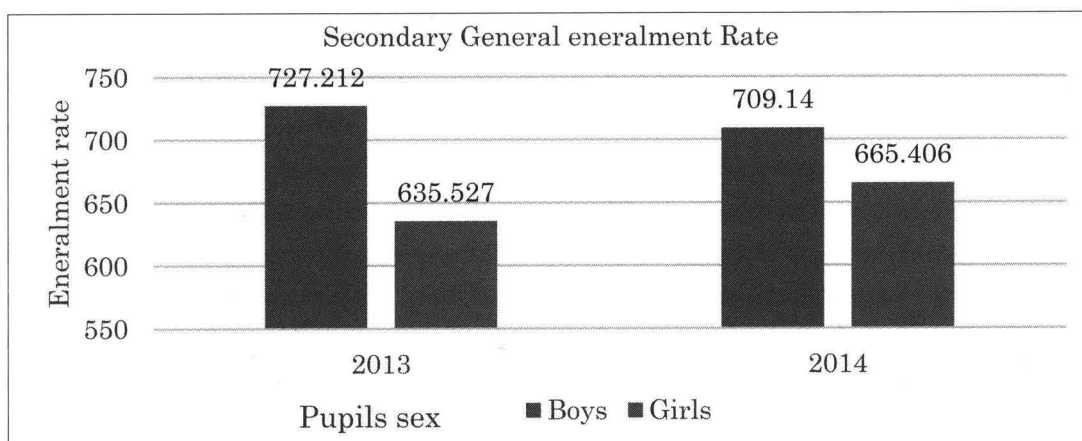


Figure 4: Secondary School General enrollment rate by gender (EMIS 2014)

**Completion Rate for O' Level Education**

Table3: Completion rate for O' Level Education (2013 & 2014)

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2013	149401	137276	286677
2014	158065	143900	301965

Table3 shows that, the total number of students who completed O' Level increased from 286,677 (boys 149,401; girls 137,276) in 2013 to 301,965(158,065 boys; 143,900 girls) in 2014. The increase was attributed to the fact that most of the students were under the USE program (EMIS 2014).

## **Institutions of higher education.**

Higher education includes a wide range of institutions offering various courses as indicated below.

### **Universities.**

Ndurya (2014), Said, Uganda is blessed with only 11 government universities and 30 private Universities located in some regions with the aim of providing prescribed courses of studies which are credited towards degree in academic discipline or profession and the course duration is from 3 to 5 years depending on the area of study. For one to qualify for University must have passed UACE. Graduate schools are in place in major universities for those who are ready and willing to join for masters and PhD. Despite the fact that universities and graduate schools are in place, majority of Ugandans cannot afford this level of education due to high cost of school fees and very few students qualify for government scholarship which has prompted the majority especially the poor to wallow in quagmire of confusion.

### **Colleges**

In Uganda colleges are of different type basing on the learners qualification. Those who have passed advance certificate of education qualify to join colleges like national teachers colleges, college of commerce, nursing schools and they all award diplomas for two years. Those who have passed senior four ( "o level" ) and willing to stop at this level they qualify to join a college that offers a course of interest. Their various colleges which include Primary teacher's colleges, which admit leans who a willing to become primary school teachers, technical and vocational education , health training colleges and they all award certificates. Although these colleges are in place many of them operate under constrain in that they lack facilities in terms of classrooms, libraries, computers and many of the graduates at this level fail to upgrade and add on knowledge posing a threat on the Uganda's future work force (National Council for Higher Education 2014).

### **Technical/ Vocational**

This type of Education is provided in purely Technical or Vocational schools or institutions. The technical schools admits pupils who have sat the primary leaving examinations while the technical institutes admits pupils who have sat the Ordinary Certificate of Education. According to World Bank (2005) in their

research they stressed that, African countries lack practical skills development but what worsens the situation is that these courses are offered to learners who have performed poorly say in PLE and UCE, with little interest in studies hence making Uganda to lag behind in practical skills development. Many of the technical or vocational graduates are not committed to their courses say some drop out and others fail to apply the gained knowledge and skills after graduation yet education at this level would hold meaning if graduates applied the gained knowledge and skills. Another issue is that we lack qualified personnel's to instil practical skills into the learners leading to continued production of half-baked graduates.

### **Lifelong learning**

Lifelong learning (learning for diverse range of purposes) is a new phenomenal in Uganda introduced in early 2000's amidst great changes taking place in society and the world over. The main emphasis was on creating a society in which everyone can learn anywhere at any time in their lives and appropriately utilize that learning to cultivate their own individuality and lead a fulfilling life. Various lifelong learning centers have been designed at major universities and in communities but the major issue is that many of the Ugandan citizens do not have a learning culture in them and they just look at it as wastage of time and resources.

### **Curriculum development and implementation**

In Uganda the national curriculum development center is in charge of developing the national curriculum, drawing syllabi and writing relevant text books to colleges and schools. The major issue in the country is that of resent the curriculum is outdated in that strong emphasis is placed on subject content at the expense of learner acquisition of marketable skills and competencies. Through the years many changes have taken place, arousing a need for education which can address the current situation. These include democracy education, HIV and Aids, health education, environmental education, financial literacy, and interactive skills (NCDC 2015).

### **Examinations**

There are two boards in charge of examinations which include the Uganda national examinations board (UNEB) in charge of P LE, UCE and UACE. The Uganda Business and Technical Examination board (UBTEB) in

charge of vocational and technical examinations. Universities are independent and set their own examinations but monitored by the national council for higher education (UNEB2014).

#### **School feeding**

Schools in Uganda have private feeding of pupils mainly maize porridge once a day however some pupils in urban center schools take packed lunch according to what is available in their homes or buy snacks from vendors within the school campus. The major issue is that many parents particularly in the rural areas cannot afford to pay even the minimal cost of the simple meal of maize meal porridge leading to pupil's starvation and neglect of school. Despite the above information the government implemented selective school feeding programmes with assistance from the UN World Food Programme in the districts of the North and North-eastern Uganda which are in a conflict situation and therefore needy but other rural parts of the country were neglected (MoES, 2015).

#### **Means of transport to school**

Road transport is commonly used where the majority of pupils use foot to access school. However some schools provide shuttle buses to transport children to and from school on private basis. The major concern is, many of the pupils walk long distances to access education prompting some to reject school and dropout.

#### **Administration of education in Uganda**

In Uganda the education act of 1970 placed the management of education at first in the hands of the ministry of education with the duty of developing, planning and financing of education system throughout the country but of recent with the trainings from JICA the central government transferred its powers, Authority, control and management of the affairs of education to local authorities at district level which has permitted quicker decision making (EMIS 2014)

#### **Current Policies on Education in Uganda**

Educational policies are many however, below are some of the current educational policies in Uganda:- From Byamugisha (2010), Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy, developed in 1997 aimed at increasing access, equity, quality of primary education, eradicating illiteracy and subsequently transform society from the doldrums of poverty. However the rapid increase in enrolment at the primary level in Uganda brought about

several challenges, one of which is the quality of the education being received at the primary level yet education of children today is a vital part of our future. Several times, we hear repeatedly in today's media that the present state of Uganda's educational system is failing. One area in particular under scrutiny is our primary school system. It is argued that our nation's primary schools are not preparing pupils with the technical knowhow, intelligence, and problem-solving skills that they need to live out their dreams and pursue successful careers (Sempala 2005). Since education plays an important role in the increase in human capital capacity and competitiveness of a country, the schools are not clearly preparing Ugandan students.

Universal Secondary Education, (USE) policy. The program started in 2007, with a view of making secondary education free to all Ugandan's which brought hope in the hearts of the poor since it was the only way to access secondary education. However, this program was ill prepared for as it was started within the existing school infrastructure and with the same manpower and three years down the road, reports from the media and evidence from schools seem to suggest that the USE program has produced increased rates of enrolment in secondary schools by the year since it was started yet if these reforms in the education sector had so far been a success story they could have a similar impact on people's attitudes regarding education ( Makerere Institute of Social Research 2009)

Girl Child Educational policy. This policy was developed in 1992 with a view of increasing on the number of girls enrolling in schools right from primary to Institutions of higher learning. More to that the government established a 1.5 point to be added to all girls joining institutions of higher learning.

HIV and AIDS Policy. Government developed a Policy on HIV/AIDS in Ugandan schools aimed at addressing HIV/AIDS in the Education Sector. Various programs have been put in place like guidance and counselling for those affected and infected with HIV and AIDS. In addition sensitisation programs have been designed in all schools at all level to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS.

## Issues in the Education system of Uganda

The Uganda Education and Sports Annual Performance Report (2014) identified the following issues in the education system:-

> Absence of a clear policy on quality assessment at all levels. Current assessment methods do not measure innovations and only require learners to reproduce what they have crammed.

> Poor linkages of Early Childhood Education (ECD) with Primary Education: The structure of the current ECD lacks curricula and pedagogical continuity. There is no ECD linkage with Primary Education.

> Inadequate Budgetary resources for planned initiatives which undermines policy implementation. Budget constraints the share of the Education and Sports Sector budget as a proportion of the national budget has continued to decline despite increasing demand for education services. This has continued to critically impact on the implementation of various education policies.

> Poor quality graduates of the education system. A mismatch continues to persist between training content and the actual skills required in the labour market. This has created a large number of graduates who have continued to be unemployed because the skills they acquired fall short of those required by the labour market. As a result, the employment rates of graduate's remains low, and is currently estimated at less than 53%.

> Inefficient and Ineffective Service Delivery. This is attributed to;

> Un acceptably high Head teacher, teachers' and Learner absenteeism estimated at 20% on the average, a primary teacher is estimated to be absent for at least 2 days a week.

> Low teacher's motivation which is attributed to low salaries; limited promotional avenues and lack of accommodation.

> The impact of HIV and AIDS on the supply of qualified teachers and participation in education by those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS has left many school-age children as orphans. Most of these children are out of school system and even, after enrolling in school, they normally drop out of the system.

> Inadequate infrastructure especially classrooms and sanitation facilities, occasioned by rapid expansion of

enrolment that outstrips capacity to provide this infrastructure. Surging School enrolment as a result of rapid population growth estimated at 3.5% per annum that put pressure on the existing resources and facilities. Uganda has one of the highest proportion of young children (age 0-14 years) currently estimated at 50%.

> Persistent Socio-economic and cultural barriers to girl's education in some parts of the country (which are contributed to by Gender-based discrimination; early marriages and teenage pregnancy; Poverty and Unsafe school environments).

> Inadequate community participation in UPE as on account of a misconception that being a public funded program, only government is responsible for its implementation;

## Methodology

In this study, the qualitative method were mainly used to investigate the research questions. Various documents were reviewed basing on their relevance to the study which included:- Uganda white paper of 1992, Uganda Ministerial policy statements 2012/2013, Uganda sector laws, policies, investment plans, regulations, strategies and programs, Uganda curriculum 2015 and publications on education in Uganda made by international organisations like World Bank and JICA. All these documents were critically analysed to understand the situation

## Conclusions and suggestions for Improvement in the education system of Uganda

On the basis of the lessons learned from the development of education in Japan the following improvements are desired in the education system of Uganda.

1. The current structure of education in Uganda need to be revised and made hierarchical and efficient in providing quality universal general education which will result in production of highly educated and adaptable work force.

2. The Ugandan educational curriculum need to be revised so as the subjects can be well linked right from pre-primary, primary, secondary and institutions of

higher learning with the introduction of moral education which can mould the learner's behaviours. In addition the curriculum should emphasize practical skills development and knowledge of the physical and natural world, the society and preparation for learning science and technology.

3. The medium of instruction at all levels of education need to be changed from the use of a foreign language (English) to gradual use of local languages at all levels of education.

4. Teachers need to be exposed to seminars, trainings and workshops abroad for them to be equipped with sufficient teaching methods and techniques.

5. The ministry of education in Uganda need to emulate the system of lesson study from Japan and introduce it in Ugandan schools at all levels of education for more effective teaching and learning.

6. Theirs need for active educational research and development activities. In Uganda however, no institution exist that has a specific mandate to conduct research and development studies in education. The Ministry of education make impacts commensurate with planning, quality control and funding education. However considering the importance of education in the world today, a fully-fledged centre for education research is desired. This centre should be charged with the responsibility for:

- (a) Appraising the effectiveness of curricula for all educational subjects or programmes at all levels of education in the country.
- (b) Conducting research on the impact of education on the economy.
- (c) Developing instructional materials for education at all levels of education.
- (d) Monitoring development of education around the world and within the country and their implications to National interests.
- (e) Developing testing innovative approaches to education in the country.

7. School administrators in Uganda need to learn to work in teams, make plans and projections for the schools in advance to avoid inconvenience.

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