



UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at assessing the implementation, achievements, experiences and challenges of MDG 2 for UPE Programme in Uganda. Opinions of key stakeholders were sought. The study revealed some significant successes in ensuring access to free and compulsory education and in reducing gender disparities at the primary school level. The greatest challenge remains that of more girls than boys not completing the primary cycle. The lessons learnt are: political commitment, government support, quality education to motivate learners to stay at school, motivation of teachers for their high commitment and stakeholder involvement.

Key words: Achievements; Challenges; MDG; Uganda; UPE

Academic Discipline And Sub-Disciplines
Management, Economics, Education

SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION
Education

TYPE (METHOD/APPROACH)
Qualitative; Survey/interview; descriptive research; Documentary analysis.

Council for Innovative Research

Peer Review Research Publishing System

Journal of Social Science Research

Vol4, No.2
editor@jssronline.com
www.cirworld.com, www.jssronline.com



1 INTRODUCTION

Countries that actively invest in knowledge creation and adaptation as well as knowledge dissemination become successful in solving their development problems¹. Human capital is built up through education or training that increases a person's economic productivity, that is, enables him/her to produce more and more valuable goods and services and thus earn a higher income improving his/her quality of life. Governments spend public funds on education because they believe that a better-educated population will contribute to faster and more sustainable development².

The Uganda government Education and Sports sector constitutes a key sector under Pillar Five of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) which addresses the challenge of human development in the country³. Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) has been succeeded by the National Development Plan (NDP) in providing direction to the national framework for education and sports delivery and development in Uganda. The overall strategy of the NDP is to create wealth in line with its theme of "Growth, employment and prosperity for socio-economic transformation"⁴. Two key objectives from the seven formulated by NDP could be related to the success of education sector, namely; increase access to quality social services and enhance human capital development and promote science, technology and innovation to enhance competitiveness.

The Government White Paper (1992) the Physical Education and Sports Policy (2004) contained in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2007-2015) and the International Commitment on Education continue to provide a framework for education and sports service delivery⁵. The Government of Uganda commenced the development of the National Development Plan (NDP) from 2010 to 2015 which is expected to provide a new national framework for planning and service delivery for all sectors of government.

UPE is seen as a tool for achieving economic, social and political objectives as summarized in the Ministry of Education and Sports policy statement. Despite the good policy intentions, the proportion of funds allocated to the Education sector has dropped⁶. Additionally, teachers are ridiculed by society, have low social esteem and some parents have not been supportive, while others prefer early marriage of their children to education⁷.

The purpose of this research is to provide an evaluation of the implementation of Goal No.2 of the MDG in Uganda, hence determining the extent to which its goal has been achieved in Uganda. The problem statement, objectives of the research project and the research methodology are highlighted.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The UPE program is in line with the international commitments made under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). This was intended to enable every child to enter and remain in school until they complete the primary education cycle.

However, experience to date shows that the implementation of UPE program appears to have encountered several setbacks. The main ones being high dropout rates, some parents have no interest in keeping and maintaining their children at school, teachers appear to have low level of job satisfaction.

The above discussion leads to the following main research question to be addressed in this study:

What are the achievements, challenges and lessons learnt from the implementation of UPE Program in Uganda?

To answer the main research question the following research objectives need to be addressed.

1.3 Research objectives

The following research objectives are identified:

- To review and discuss in detail the status of UPE Program implementation;
- To describe and examine the status of UPE program across social divides;
- To determine successes and challenges of UPE program implementation; and
- To provide lessons learnt

1.4 Methodology

The research used a cross sectional study using a qualitative approach to assess the experiences and opinions of key stakeholders. The key stakeholders included: governmental officials in the Ministry of Education and Sports, teachers, parents and pupils. A triangulation of data collection methods (document analysis, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions) was used. For the purpose of this study, the target population consisted of stakeholders involved in primary education sector in districts of Soroti and Kampala. The respondents were purposively selected who were knowledgeable and with experience about UPE implementation programme. The study was focused on government owned schools in which UPE Programme is being implemented. Focused group discussions were carried out with pupils



who were prefects in the selected primary schools in the two districts of Soroti and Kampala. Details of population for teachers and pupils are indicated in Table 2 in the section of findings.

2.0 THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This section presents an overview of generic theories related to the concept of development under which development programs are undertaken. It reviews the achievement of goals, challenges and lessons learnt from the implementation of development programs.

2.2 Development theories

Development theories have been motivated by the need and challenges in improving society. There have been six development theoretical perspectives since the 1800s for the transformation of society. The most recent are: dependency which involved decolonization, structural adjustment in the 1980s involving neo-liberalism, monetization and the current perspective of human development, which emphasizes capabilities, took root from the 1990s⁸.

Development can be viewed from three generic stand points. It can be considered as a long term process of structural societal transformation, or, as a short –to- medium term outcome of desirable targets, or as a dominant discourse of western modernity⁹. The explanation for development in the 1990s is through developing human capabilities and countries world over have unequal endowment of natural resources¹⁰. The productivity with which countries use their productive resources – physical capital, human capital and natural capital is widely recognized as the main indicator of their level of economic development. The survival and growth of national economies in the knowledge economy requires a skilled labour force with the capacity to learn and adapt by continually producing and engaging with codified knowledge, particularly through information and communications technology¹¹. In a knowledge economy, job security is replaced by skill security and it is assumed that most occupations involve the generation of ideas and ingenuity.

The present research is premised on the current development thinking which uses the development of human capabilities to explain development. This perspective is a subset of the sustainable livelihood approach which is considered in terms of available capital: natural, human, social, physical and financial¹². Indeed, the UNDP subscribes to this approach when it defines human development as *“a process of enlarging people’s choices. In principle these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain accessible,”* emphasis added¹³.

The increase in human capital will result from acquiring knowledge which is obtained from education. This is one of the reasons for MDGs emphasizing Education For All (EFA) as one of its goals. The globalization of education has greatly expanded opportunities for students to acquire knowledge outside their countries of origin as it has an economic potential to generate revenue for training institutions as well as contribute towards the national economy¹⁴. Education is a powerful tool in improving the other measures of poverty¹⁵. Persons with good education generally have good health and better standard of living, while actively participating in the political process. An effective strategy for managing the internal attributes of any government relies heavily on the capabilities of people to provide a competitive edge¹⁶. The four internal attributes important to a country’s ability to develop, manage and deliver products and services are: physical, financial, organizational, and human. Of these, the human element is the cornerstone of the internal resources of the economy. The effective management of this element can lead to organizational financial and knowledge performance. Furthermore, successful economies are those that routinely maximize the value of their intellectual capital.

Defining poverty in the multi-dimensional context is critical to identifying measures needed to address poverty on the African continent¹⁷. The multi-dimensional approach to the analysis of poverty suggests that African governments can only be successful in eradicating poverty and hunger if both income and non-income poverty measures are equally addressed. To minimize problems of underdevelopment, people must begin with appropriate education and training programs aimed at improving the quality of the human factor¹⁸. The human factor (HF) perspective provides the best approach for understanding the contemporary problems facing Africa. The significance of the HF approach to development is its ability to specify the interdependent nature of the six HF components (spiritual capital, moral capital, aesthetic capital, human capital, human abilities and human potential) of the theory to explain the development process. The key to Africa’s development is the establishment of positive human factor on the continent which is essential in creating productive, social, economic and political institutions on the continent as tools for development. The impact of the neglect of positive human factor development in Sub-Saharan Africa goes beyond corruption and mismanagement, leading to the concentration of the wealth of Africa in the hands of the corrupt managers of the continent’s social, economic and political institutions.



Foreign capital plays an important role in the formulation of key policies in development programmes in Africa¹⁹. However, the conditions attached to this type of assistance have made it an effective foreign policy tool that works primarily in the interests of the foreign donors. The resultant effect of these conditions makes Africa lose control over the formulation and implementation of key policy decisions intended to address mounting problems and challenges facing the continent. The development problems facing Africa reflect the presence of severe human factor decay (HFD) on the continent²⁰. Human factor decay is a phenomenon of negative attitudes, behaviors and actions as evidenced in personal lack of accountability, integrity, honesty, responsibility and caring. People who suffer from this syndrome find it too difficult to make development plans, policies, programs and projects to function as effectively as expected.

In conclusion Universal Primary Education is therefore located in the current theoretical domain of human development. The pursuit of it will lead to both an increase in literacy rates and the quantity of the youth with basic education who can be further trained and ultimately access resources necessary for a decent standard of living.

3.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study sought to assess the extent to which the benefits of education have since 1997 been extended to all children; boys and girls in Uganda, and whether as a country we are meeting the Dakar goals. Specifically, the study sought to: assess the policy formulation and implementation of UPE Programme; document the level of achievement and challenges faced in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal 2 in Uganda; propose policy orientation and actions within the Education sector to address the challenges/gaps identified in the research; and to document lessons that can be learnt from the current level of intervention.

Using an interview guide as a data collection instrument, the assessment was done in the month of October 2013. This was used by the researchers on a face-to-face encounter with the key informants. It helped the researchers in establishing and probing in-depth data collection for the study about UPE Programme implementation. Interview guide has advantages that questions may be clarified, to help the respondent give relevant data. It involved nearly 50 respondents from the two regions of the country who were randomly and purposively sampled on the basis of their knowledge, experience on the UPE programme implementation as related to the MDG 2 and pupils as the beneficiaries as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample of respondents interviewed

No	Category	Sample
1	Governmental officials	5
2	Teachers	15
3	Parents	10
4	Pupils	20
	Total	50

The views of key stakeholders such as: government officials, teachers, parents and pupils were sought. The other two methods of data collection used were documentary analysis and observation. In the next section, the views of respondents were captured in relation to the formulation and implementation of UPE policy in Uganda.

3.1 Policy formulation and implementation

The policy of introducing UPE in Uganda dates back to a strategy which had been in paper since 1963²¹. Policy making in Uganda is open and participatory, contributing to the government's ability to mobilize popular support for implementing any foreseen difficult changes.

In recognition of the role of education in poverty reduction, the government of Uganda decided in 1997 to pursue a policy of UPE. The overall objective of the UPE is to enable Uganda children of the school going age to access education opportunities. However, on UPE policy, some parents described it as a sham as expressed here below:

"...policy implementation of UPE programme in my locality is a sham. It is a good policy, yes, but Ugs 2,250/= per child a term is not realistic..." Parents Teachers' Association (PTA) which was supposed to link parents and teachers did not receive adequate attention from government. The government must first change its attitude and work more with parents. The school management committees instituted by government are not helping the situation because they try to implement government policies to the letter and therefore in some cases end up conflicting with PTA. PTA may want to charge parents some money but government disallows this. So it is a problem implementing UPE Programme..."



This is a clear indication that parents as key stakeholders are not adequately involved in policy formulation. For effective policy formulation, there is need to carry out adequate consultation among all stakeholders to drum support so that there is ownership in the course of implementation.

This seems to agree with the observation made that Primary education did not feature highly in the set of projects, which the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government considered of top priority for implementation during the planned period²². The Rehabilitation and Development Plan (1987/88-1990/91) reflecting new priorities which replaced a strategic paper for introducing UPE in 1963, did not discuss UPE although it set some goals for the education sector as a whole.

Among these goals were²³:

- restructure the educational curriculum with a view to producing responsible citizens;
- expand facilities for technical and commercial education in order to provide the required manpower for development;
- restore educational facilities especially in areas where these facilities were destroyed by war; and
- lay a foundation for the provision of adequate educational opportunities to the growing population.

It is therefore clear that the government was not prepared for the implementation of UPE programme due to inadequate resources. This is evidenced by lack of adequate classrooms, teaching and learning instructional materials, teachers agitating strikes due to low pay and poor working relationships amongst stakeholders. However, the political arm of NRM having won the elections and made promises for free primary education for four children per family in their manifesto announced the inauguration of UPE in 1997 contrary to the recommendations of the Government White Paper²⁴.

The promise was that government would pay tuition fees (statutory fees) for four children per Ugandan family, to cover the entire primary cycle of P1 to P7 (for a start). Government was also to provide textbooks and other instructional materials for both the pupils and teachers – for all subjects taught, and to meet the cost of co-curricular activities i.e. sports and clubs for all children in the lower and upper classes, as well as school administration expenses and maintenance, including utilities such as water and electricity. Other costs Government accepted to meet included payment of salaries of teachers and support staff, training of teachers and contribution to the construction of classrooms.

The free education for the four children could not be sustained as it appeared the government later on withdrew the ceiling (whether formally or quietly), and made access to UPE “open” so that every child who was interested in schooling was allowed to enroll. The President’s four-children/family reform model failed to work right from the start. “Although the policy was well conceived, its implementation did not give due consideration it deserved”, lamented one parent.

Ideally Policy formulation should involve all stakeholders, in particular the implementers. Teachers as the key implementers were not satisfied in the way the programme was to be implemented as they were not brought on board. They felt there were a lot of missing gaps, particularly the mobilization of resources and the methodology in implementation.

A person who is more job involved may perceive fewer available alternatives; he/she may opt to participate more actively in the required activities of the organization, translating into improved performance²⁵. Teachers who show greater job involvement, whose sense of self-identity is closely linked with their work, show higher motivation to teach than do teachers who are less involved.

Furthermore, in any educational programme a teacher is the most important²⁶. Whenever we have good teachers, there are good schools regardless of the kind of buildings or the kind of equipment. The education and personal well being of children in schools hinge crucially on the competence, commitment and resourcefulness of their teachers.

3.2 Key achievements on UPE implementation

The study has revealed that Uganda has registered some significant successes in ensuring access to free and compulsory education and in reducing gender disparities especially at the primary school level. Table 2 shows the education and sports performance indicators for the years 2008-2012.

Table 2: Education and Sports performance indicators for the year 2008-2012

Indicator	Year				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Enrollment:					
Boys	3,987,160	4,150,037	4,179,248	4,038,734	4,168,939
Girls	3,976,819	4,147,743	4,195,400	4,058,443	4,168,130
Percentage of girls to total enrollment	49.9%	49.99%	50.06%	50.12%	49.995%



Completion rate:					
Boys	51%	55%	56%	65%	68%
Girls	47%	48%	51%	63%	66%
Literacy rate:					
P3: Boys	43.80%	55.2%	57.9%	47.3%	58%
Girls	45.30%	56.5%	57.3%	48.5%	57.4%
P6: Boys	47.90%	47.9%	49.7%	42.1%	49.72
Girls	47.80%	48.2%	51.7%	40.6%	50.78%
Numeracy rate:					
P3: Boys	74.6%	72.8%	74.1%	65%	74.2%
Girls	68.1%	69.7%	71.7%	61%	72%
P6: Boys	58.80%	58.7%	57.9%	49.6%	58%
Girls	48.40%	48.1%	52.1%	41.7%	52.4%
Oral reading at P3:					
Boys				45.6%	46%
Girls				46.9%	47%
PLE rate	80.7%	85.6%	88.0%	86.4%	88%
Number of classrooms	114, 441	121,212	144,916	142,802	144, 513
Indicator	Year				
Enrollment:	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Enrollment by ownership:					
Government:					
Boys	289,083	311,936	324,448	324,643	362,415
Girls:	225,257	288,695	342,948	343,154	294,221
Private:					
Boys	300,275	336,078	330,523	337,360	306,919
Girls:	274,129	307,745	227,773	252,927	283,882
Repetition rates	11%	11.7%	10.9%	10.2%	10.6%
Dropout rates	4.7%	4.5%	4.4%	4.67%	Not available
Total number of teachers	159,516	168,376	172,403	169,503	181,232
Teachers on government payroll	124,595	123,901	124,851	129,694	131,551
Enrollment growth rate	5.7%	3%	1%	-3%	3%
Public current expenditure on primary education as a %age of GDP	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

Source: Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) 2000-2012.

The main achievements of UPE program in the country include²⁷:

3.2.1 Increased access

Enrolment figures after the launching of UPE have been increasing since its launch with nearly 2.5 million in 1996 to slightly over 8 million in 2012²⁸. This increase is mainly for three reasons. Firstly, natural population growth rate estimated at 3.2%, the backlog of school age children who had not been accessing school are now able to do so while more of the children who had attained the school age but would not have afforded education prior to UPE were now able to enroll²⁹. The overall numbers of children in the primary school seems to be increasing every other year.

The adoption of UPE has relied majorly on increased awareness of the population about the importance of educating their children in order to increase and sustain enrollment. Government has also enacted some bylaws, in particular the education of a girl. Politicians on their part are pursuing vigorously for increased enrollment in UPE schools with the agenda to produce educated population which will in a long run provide market for goods and services, ultimately improving the socioeconomic development of the country.

3.2.2 Creation of additional facilities

To facilitate easy access to schools, the Ministry of Education and Sports has also embarked on building of more primary and secondary schools. For example, by end of 2008, there were 114,441 classrooms for primary school children while



by the end of 2012, a total of 144,513 classrooms were in use. The increase in the stock of class rooms of about 26% could be attributed to the UPE program.

It is important to note that in some instances, there is a creative response by parents to the UPE opportunity by sending their children to school. This therefore has influenced parents and management to improvise by constructing additional facilities and/or open space learning.

3.2.3 More teachers recruited

An increase in the number of children in school invariably requires an increase in the number of teachers required. To address this and as part of the wider reform under the Primary Education and Teacher Development Project, there have been deliberate efforts to restructure primary teacher education and to increase the number of teachers trained/retrained/upgraded. As a result, between 2008 and 2012 the number of teachers on the government pay role increased from about 125,000 to 132,000 representing a 5% increase over the period under study.

3.2.4 Literacy and numeracy rates

Table 2 clearly indicates that both literacy and numeracy are gradually increasing over the years. This implies the literacy rates of the future adult population will increase thereby increasing the quality of stock of the human capital intended to enhance productivity and technology adoption.

Despite the ever increasing number of children being registered under the UPE Programme, a number of challenges are also being realized as presented in the next section.

3.3 Challenges faced in UPE implementation

UPE implementation is still limited irrespective of the initiatives to address its implementation challenges³⁰. The challenges are said to include:

- Inadequate capacity for effective accountability of financial resources;
- Persistent shortage in infrastructure implementation; and
- Inadequate community support and limited communication amongst stake holders.

3.3.1 Mismatch between enrolment numbers and available resources

Minimum standards require that a class should not comprise of more than 60 pupils. However, all schools that were surveyed by the Uganda Debt Network (UDN) were found with a classroom to pupil ratios above 60. Consequently, some classes had three times the expected number of pupils. In some primary schools some classrooms had been converted into living quarters for teachers which again exacerbated the shortage of classrooms³¹.

3.3.2 Social economic environment

Aspects such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, conflict and population changes greatly affect the implementation and management of UPE, for example; because of poverty families cannot afford scholastic materials and other extra schooling expenses, schools disrupted by conflict and HIV/AIDS constraining the immense demand and supply of education³².

3.3.3 Lack of reliable and up-to-date educational data

The creation of up-to-date and comprehensive data banks for the education sector has been constrained by budget provisions which made effective planning, administration of education, optimum use of resources difficult.

3.3.4 Financial challenges

Respondents at all levels cited delays in UPE funds, fluctuations of the budget (money requested differing from money received) and inadequate amount of finance to meet estimated school expenditures as the major financial challenges they faced in implementing UPE. Teachers were reported protesting on a small pay rise as they displayed placards, "Have we taught the nation to forget us? We want Shs. 200,000=" ³³.

3.3.5 Coordination challenges



Limited facilitation, weak linkage between levels and decentralizes UPE policy operating in a centralized system are the major coordination challenges faced during the implementation of UPE with this challenge being more pronounced with a 100% acknowledgment at the district and school level and 67% lesser acknowledgment at the national level³⁴.

3.3.6 Communication challenges

Some respondents observed that, lack of effective communication channels, limited facilitation resulting from limited finances and inadequate flow of information as some of the major challenges of UPE implementation. There was also inadequate feedback from central government thus challenging UPE coordination and implementation. The findings indicate that the Ministry of Education and Sports should be more engaged in organizing activities and the interpretation of goals and objectives for the management of UPE³⁵.

3.3.7 Institution control challenges

Some civil servants in the managerial positions might not have the requisite management skills especially those just promoted from being teacher to head teacher without a bridging on the job training to take on bigger responsibilities and also district officials without any form of management skills therefore posing a big challenge in UPE implementation³⁶.

3.3.8 Civil strife

Implementation of UPE policy has had a lot of challenges in the Northern Uganda. For over two decades; this area experienced a devastating civil war waged by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) against the Government. This war did not only result into massive displacement of the entire population to camps, but seems to have been child-targeting and depriving their right of education. For example, the recent report of the abducted children amounts to about 26,662³⁷. UPE in practice has not taken into consideration the needs of children from this part of the country as there are few schools/ classes within camps³⁸. Poor communication and inadequate coordination are the greatest challenges facing UPE implementation³⁹.

Community civil society support and involvement are key for the successful implementation of UPE as outlined in UPE stakeholder's guideline. However, this seems not to be the case because of the top down approach to implementation of UPE that has limited involvement of lower level stakeholders especially when it comes to planning and implementation of UPE⁴⁰.

Parents are being blamed for diverting their children into domestic labour, fishing, growing of rice and sugar cane, coupled with the early marriage of girls⁴¹. A number of respondents observed,

"... that some parents have distanced themselves from participating in school activities because they feel that they have played their part by contributing a certain percentage required for learning, for example, fees, feeding of children and uniform..."

Improvement of quality education means improving the provision of educational inputs and enhancing processes like involving teachers in the design and decision making since they are central in the implementation of UPE in Uganda. This would consequently improve output of education system⁴².

3.3 Lessons learnt in UPE implementation

The UPE programme in Uganda demonstrates that a poor country with a committed government and donor support can fight poverty through ensuring universal access to education for its citizens. The significant increase in primary school enrolment is also an indication that the payment of school fees was a big impediment to accessing education, especially for poor families.

Three main lessons have been learnt from the experience of UPE in Uganda. First, institutional constraints to the delivery of quality education services, including corruption, are big challenges. An expenditure tracking study conducted by the Economic Policy Research Centre, Kampala in 1997 found that by that time, only 35% of funds released from the central government to schools were reaching the intended beneficiaries. Corruption was adversely affecting UPE in various ways, including shoddy work in construction of primary school structures, demoralization of teachers, and poor performance of UPE pupils in national examinations. In some districts, classrooms that were constructed by private firms were reportedly collapsing before completion of construction.

Second, community contributions of labour and building materials have generally failed to materialise. This is most likely on account of poor community mobilisation, and the engagement of parents in other income-generating activities.



Members of Parliament appear to have made little impact in sensitizing and mobilize communities to be active partners in the implementation of UPE Programme.

Third, liberalisation of the education sector has reduced the financial burden on the Government as relatively wealthier parents have opted to send their children to private schools. However, the Government is yet to fully take advantage of the liberalisation of the education sector so as to maximise the impact of UPE. There is scope for the Government to work more in partnership with private education service providers to maximize the synergies between UPE and the liberalisation of education.

Achieving universal primary education in Uganda using the “Big Bang approach” requires:⁴³

- Successful educational reforms in developing countries like Uganda require high levels of political and education management commitment that is sustained over a long period;
- The “Big Bang approach” can be a very powerful policy instrument for getting all the children into school and Uganda had managed to do this well; and
- Timely, flexible donor support is a critical factor.

It has been apparent that from the outset that free primary education would need support from donors or lending agencies if it were to succeed⁴⁴. However, in Uganda some international agencies were skeptical or reluctant and joined in the initial criticism about lack of planning, the decline in quality, the lack of capacity, and the near impossibility that the programs could be sustained.

The Policymakers in Uganda acknowledge that universal primary education can be sustainable only if it is part of a whole-sector approach to developing the educational system⁴⁵. Uganda started with primary education and is now in the process of looking at the Universal Secondary Education (USE) sector. Plans are already being made on how to meet the increase in the demand for post primary education by providing increased skills training and formal secondary education.

The key lessons that can be learnt from the current level of intervention are that political commitment, a high level of government support and effective partnership with other Stakeholders are central to the attainment of the MDG 2. In particular funding levels and the provision of appropriate policies and strategies together with effective monitoring ensure success as can be exemplified by the UPE.

Another lesson is that reforms in the education sub-sector at any one level or aspect have ramifications on the other sub-sectors or aspects, meaning that other sub-sectors or aspects will in turn need reforms. This has been true of the effect of the ‘UPE Bulge’ on post primary education which has forced government to support the secondary and tertiary subsectors as well. In order to achieve some of these goals by 2015, increased funding is required in addition to systematic implementation strategies.

It is important to note that high community sensitization and participation are crucial in the successful implementation of UPE Programme so that they have ownership of the Programme and willingly guard against abuse by some corrupt technocrats. The communalities can act as watch dogs ensuring that UPE projects are successfully implemented as planned.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The necessary laws should be enacted to ensure that all children remain at school at all levels of education particularly at primary level. Alongside the current interventions, government should ensure quality education in order to motivate learners to stay at school, motivate teachers to increase their level of commitment, increase stakeholders’ involvement and ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of UPE Programme by government officials.

Improving UPE programme implementation could be improved by tackling institutional constraints to the delivery of quality education services, taking advantage of opportunities offered by the liberalization of the education sector, reducing inequity in access to education and the quality of education across districts and between rural and urban areas.

In order to reduce inequity both in access to education and in the quality of education, the UPE programme should aim to increase expenditure per pupil in UPE schools in rural areas and for the urban poor. By so doing, the Government would have more resources at its disposal to focus on improving the quality of education and reducing drop-out rates in the areas of its operation where it is most needed.

The quality of UPE delivered appears to be less than desired. The literacy and numeracy rates which test child competences at the respective levels are all below 60% meaning that about 40% of the remaining pupils are deemed not competent to be in the class they are in. However, if they are allowed to proceed to higher classes this will have an impact



on the number of repeaters, pass rates and quality of the UPE graduates. The UPE strategy should therefore transition from emphasis on quantity to quality which again would require a well thought out and articulated quality assurance program which covers the entire cycle of the UPE program.

The involvement of the community and parents as stake holders is critical in the success of UPE. Firstly a top down approach alienates the other stake holders and creates the perception that they are not considered important in the implementation of the program. Secondly, since value is perceptual involvement of stakeholders helps in changing their mindset and thereby making them more receptive to the program. Some parents were noted to prefer early marriage, involvement in petty trade for their children to attending UPE.

The enrolment figures of girls appear to have caught up with that of the boys. It appears in the medium term the privileges hitherto accorded to the girl child will have to be reconsidered in light of all inclusive growth. Much focus has been done on why the girl child drops out of school but there is a drought of research on the boy child.

There are also data gaps at present in the way data is captured on UPE programs. For instance, though there is aggregate data on annual enrollments data is not available for cohorts of each class through the education cycle. This makes it difficult to pinpoint problems and or follow the effect of UPE programs per cohort of pupils.

The government is at the moment the major provider of education at primary level. However at the post primary level the enrollment of students is significant indicating that most of the private sector investments are at post primary level. Since the private sector follows profit it is incumbent on government to put in place incentives that would make investment in the primary education sector more profitable than it is. Secondly, given rapid population growth government will most likely not be able to adequately provide for a quality education at the primary level.

Finally, given the limited resource envelop available to government donor support will continue to be important up to the medium term in the creation of facilities and learning materials for UPE. This is mainly because over the last years budgetary allocation to UPE has remained constant at 2% despite the increase in pupil enrollment. Furthermore, the private sector appears not to be willing to invest significantly in primary education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the Editor and reviewers' constructive comments and guidance on the earlier version of the paper. This work was entirely an initiative of the authors in an attempt to review the development of the education sector in Uganda based on the Millennium Development Goal Number 2.

NOTES

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