



Effects of Universal Primary Education on Completion Rates of Pupils in Primary Schools in Isingiro District

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Abstract: *Introducing UPE worldwide led to a surge in enrolment rates in most countries, which often overwhelmed and exceeded the capacity of education systems. Severe constraints such as shortage of teachers and school materials led to overcrowding in Uganda, the student teacher ratio moved from 37.6million in 1996 to 59.4million in 1997. dropout rates also increased and survival rates sunk from 59% to 37%. Notable is that promoting a nation's social and economic growth depends on universal primary education. This article investigated the universal basic education policy and the primary school completion rates of pupils in Isingiro District in South Western Uganda. A secondary data review and a qualitative research approach were the study's compass. Document analysis was done, data from articles reports and research done by different scholars was collected to identify and examine relevant themes associated with the effect of UPE on completion rates in primary schools of Isingiro district. The main conclusion was that the introduction of UPE in primary schools of Isingiro district did not have observable positive change on the completion rates at the end of primary seven as compared to when UPE was not yet introduced to Ugandan education system.*

Keywords: *Universal Primary Education, Completion rate, Poor performance, Education systems, Education policy*

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1. Introduction

According to the UN 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), countries were to achieve UPE education for all children by the year 2015, UN Millennium Summit, 6-8 September 2000, New York in respect to that the Government of Uganda rolled out Universal Primary Education. This resulted into massive increase in enrolment to wit 2.5 million in 1996 to 8.2 million in 2015 as sited by Mutabaruka and Kazooba (2017) According to Uganda education act 2008 policy, implementation of UPE was to among other things increase access to education improve numeracy and literacy by providing adequate facilities such as infrastructure, teaching learning materials and provision of human resource which Government has since addressed to some extent but to a smaller degree.

Globally promoting a nations social and economic growth depends on Universal Primary Education, UPE

has been an issue everywhere in the world; in Finland, for instance, completion rates seem moderate even if the program has a 100% completion rate (Nordberg, 2017). Other nations that have high completion rates are Austria, Canada, and Norway. This is supported by reports from UNESCO and the World Bank. But poor academic performance is a common issue that worsens in poorer nations. Once UPE was introduced the policy led to a surge in enrolment in most countries which were overwhelmed and exceeded the capacity of the education systems constraints such as shortage of teachers, schools and school, materials led to overcrowding. Avenstrup, Liang and Nelleman (2004) In Uganda for example, dropout rates increased and survival rates sunk from 59% to 37% world bank (2014). According to Sekiwu Et al (2020) Uganda is regarded as having the lowest primary completion rates in the world.

However, as Government undertakings being still inadequate, also other factors especially lack of parental support to provide scholastic materials such as lunch,

sanitary towels, uniform, transport to and from schools are major challenges to education to UPE schools in Uganda.

This article intended to investigate the impact of UPE on completion rates in primary schools of Isingiro district. It is observed that the completion rates of primary going pupils greatly increased even after introducing UPE and despite the fact that automatic promotion was implemented to offset the large number of pupils moving through the system after UPE - Samarrai 2003 this automatically grossly affected the quality of education and consequently increased dropout rates research on UPE Schools in the Isingiro area conducted by Okello et al. (2020), Mujuni et al. (2022), Kyambadde (2022), and Akatwijuka (2021) shows that a significantly lesser proportion of students enrol in primary one finish primary seven. For instance, in Uganda, the primary school completion rate was 53.1% in 2015, and around 1.2 million students did not complete primary school (Daily Monitor, July 19, 2019).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Efforts to Promote Universal Primary Education

The Free of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) since 1999 have led to notable advancements in achieving universal primary enrolment. Achieving universal primary education, or even more precisely, "ensuring that by 2015, all children everywhere, boys and girls equally, will be expected to have completed a full course of primary schooling," was the UN's second and final Millennium Development Goal. The Hogan, 2021. The attainment of the remaining MDGs was also contingent upon education.

However, growth has stalled internationally since 2007, even if enrolment has increased over the preceding 10 years. In almost 20 countries, net enrolment or punctuality is less than 80% Zakar et al, (2020). Specialised solutions are needed to address the many barriers children face worldwide when attempting to complete their elementary education. According to Naveed (2021), "just 20% of primary school-age children worldwide but 50% of out-of-school children" live in conflict-affected areas. Wealth disparities also greatly affect the percentage of students who drop out of school. Compared to children from wealthy families, individuals from the lowest 20 per cent of the general population are far less inclined to attend school Spaul, (2015).

Although there are now more students in sub-Saharan Africa than twenty years ago with access to some sort of basic education, many remain without an education in school. Many others start school but leave before finishing the basics, and still more, especially those who live in unsafe areas, have decided not to attend at all.

There have been promises to greatly expand access to education due to the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The degree of teacher preparation to accommodate the huge number of school-age children likewise appears to be prevalent. A review of pedagogical renewal experiences draws attention to the difficulties in implementing open-ended teaching methods on the subcontinent. But to accomplish a meaningful UPE, teacher preparation programs and pedagogical reform are essential to ensuring that Sub-Saharan Africa has access to fair, high-quality universal primary education Bennell (2021).

2.2 Universal Primary Education in Uganda

According to Mwesigwa (2015), even with an annual budget of 302 million USD for UPE, 70% of children are still likely to drop out of school due to unreported costs that make tuition unaffordable for low-income parents. Concurring with Mwesigwa, Katwe Primary School's principal, Iren Namusubo, asserted that over 250 pupils did not show up for the new academic year in 2015, suggesting that although some could have moved to another elementary school, it was more probable that some had withdrawn out. She continues by saying that since 1997, Katwe Primary School, a government school in Kampala, has been a UPE institution. This may have been a dream come true for wealthy students, as seen by the enrolment increase to 90% in 2013 but subsequent decline.

Only 32 per cent of Ugandan pupils enrolled in primary one is expected to be in primary seven, according to a UNESCO study. This greatly impacts The Isingiro District, especially in the rural areas. Former Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) chairman Fagil Monday pointed out that even though schools are institutions where nurturing takes place and should be continuously examined and monitored, the government and other stakeholders have not paid much attention to them.

Monday concurs with Magnet Rwabusheija, Chairperson of Uganda National Teachers Union (2012) when he claimed that the government must consider acceptable funds to allow Head Teachers of elementary schools to manage these schools properly and with less effort. She based her case on government-funded tuition.

Regarding the standard of instruction, Betty Titanesha, the deputy head teacher of Kitante Primary Schools, observed that although teachers at government primary schools are frequently highly qualified, their work ethic is typically lower. For example, they are the lowest-paid public employees in Uganda. Rwabusheija (2012) reports that the poll showed a substantial knowledge gap between urban and UPE students, with 20% of P.7 students and 30% of P.3 students unable to read a story at the P.2 level. Every kid has the right to an education,

but those not enrolled in school are denied that right and are not granted equitable access, claims Mbyangu (2014). Children's opportunities for the future are greatly limited by their education.

Turinawe (2022) asserts in her scholarly work on primary school dropouts in the Ntungamo municipality that poverty is the biggest factor contributing to school dropouts in UPE schools. Research by International Window Uganda carried out in the impacted region in November 2022 discovered that inconsistent enrolment in school, marriage before marriage, peer pressure, and a lack of family support were some of the causes behind the high dropout rate in these areas. The proportion of impacted students in refugee settlements is 51.5% male and 48.2% female. Kikafunda et al. (2012) concurred with Window that the availability of meals significantly influences school dropout rates in Uganda and the district of Isingiro. With implications for education, Acham et al. (2012) study looked at academic attainment in rural Ugandan primary schools and breakfast and lunchtime diets. Kikafunda et al. (2012) agreed with Window that the school dropout rate in Uganda and the Isingiro area was significantly influenced by food. Klasen (2020) pointed to tuition and other unspecified expenses as a significant cause of Uganda's high school dropout rate.

2.3 A Survey of UPE Completion Rates in Isingiro District

Uganda was one of the African countries that adopted UPE; the government built schools and educated teachers there. Despite eliminating tuition fees, she has the highest global student dropout rate, with over 5% of children of school age never enrolling Candia (2018). Financial hardship is the main factor contributing to Uganda's high school dropout rates. Of those asked, 81% claimed that their choice to drop out was due to a lack of money, and 58% never went. According to Ngabirano (2010), 28% of respondents said their lack of interest in school caused them to drop out, while 20% identified traffic as a major contributing issue.

According to research by Mujuni et al. (2022), all parties involved in the Isingiro District need to consider the availability of qualified teachers, educational resources, and school facilities to support the district's teaching-learning processes. In addition, stakeholders should investigate enacting legislation requiring compulsory education, addressing gender problems and special needs, such as access to restrooms, and improving teacher welfare to reduce dropout rates in primary schools. However, Musika (2019) noted that the cause of Uganda's UPE problem is ghost schools, which are brought on by a lack of school supplies, literature, infrastructure, and corruption.

UPE faces financial difficulties, a dearth of facilities, and an uncomfortable working atmosphere for instructors at Isingiro, among other sites in Uganda. Rather, they are

sometimes paid late, face occasional harassment and annoyance, labour under unfavourable conditions, and are handled like slaves by their superiors Mujuni et al., (2022). Occasionally, they face discrimination, are passed over for promotions, and are not given perks like paid time off, health insurance, and housing allowances. They are occasionally also not compensated for overtime. Sometimes, the corporation can solve this by offering training to some extent, as the absence of required talents is the only reason employees are let go from their professions Mujuni et al., (2022). The performance of certain organisations has also been significantly influenced by their leadership approaches.

3. Methodology

This study was built on a qualitative research methodology that involved document analysis a review of secondary sources. Because the study's approach focused on obtaining and analysing non-numerical data to understand people's attitudes, beliefs, and motivations regarding their social reality, the design was ideal Mohajan, (2018). The study's course was determined by the case study design, focusing on Uganda's Isingiro District as the study area. Textual analysis was used to understand the research problem, and secondary data from reports, textbooks, and journal articles were examined as information sources. An assessment was conducted to uncover gaps, similarities, and differences in the review results. These were arranged into relevant subthemes related to the subject matter. This enabled the researcher to investigate the study's problem using guidance on validity assessment from several sources.

4. Results and Discussion

Compared to students who enrolled in the primary leaving exam in 2008, those who took it in 2015 finished it at a rate of 53.4%, according to secondary data that was evaluated. Furthermore, research demonstrated that pedagogical components such as poorly written lesson plans, teachers with insufficient training, and instructors' dedication to fulfilling their professional obligations substantially influenced students' educational outcomes. For example, according to a study by Mutabaruka and Kazooba (2017), just 21% of first graders passed the 2015 PLE tests, and about 35.4% were not evaluated this inadequate infrastructure and human resource lead to demotivated staff, poor quality education, demotivating pupils thus dropping out before completion.

Additionally, it was noted that a number of the pupils came from family units that relied on farming for a living, resulting in adolescents' labour, poor nutrition, as well as a large number of students who were unable to continue their schooling because they had lost their parental figures or guardians. Further observations revealed that several schools lacked basic facilities, such as appropriate classrooms, drinking water, restrooms, and easily accessible teachers, and that some students

had to travel Hapompwe (2020). This school environment must be addressed to avoid overcrowding which leads to lack of individual attention of pupils by teachers thus poor performance lack of interest and failure to complete school.

It was observed that government policies regarding feeding programs had a negative effect on the completion of primary school for such impoverished orphans and vulnerable children and that some head teachers had sent students away for non-payment of school fees in violation of the government's regulations regarding the execution of Universal Basic Education. Related research done in 2015 by Christine for UNICEF states that poverty and child labour account for 32 per cent of school dropout rates report released in (2022). This meant that everyone who needed to be concerned needed to do so to stop this from happening. Research by Tamusuza (2011), which revealed that 67% of Ugandan youngsters lack access to quality education and are illiterate, corroborated this message. Furthermore, 63% of young people are working, 61% have been impacted by culture and cultural ideas, and 56% of pupils are affected by the location of their schools. Isingiro's high school dropout rate is an issue, as it is throughout Uganda, and the rural issues facing the district are national in scope cultural issues, distance from school, lack of meals are major challenges to be addressed for the enhancement of quality education and completion rates in primary schools of Isingiro District.

Additionally, it was found that when the school atmosphere was positive, government-aided primary schools in the Isingiro area of Uganda performed much better. The findings are consistent with those of the Ntho and Lesotho Council of NGOs (2013), which discovered that many Lesotho schools were overcrowded, lacked proper furniture, water, and sanitation services, and had an unattractive appearance, all of which contributed to pupils' irregular attendance in class. This implies that at government-sponsored elementary schools in the Isingiro district of Uganda, a safer, more secure, and more protected learning environment is necessary for the academic achievement of both teachers and kids. According to the survey's findings, most of the Isingiro district's schools lacked staff spaces and appropriate bathrooms for instructors and pupils Mujuni et al., (2022). There were schools with badly maintained walls, floors, and blackboards. This may help explain the low academic performance in Uganda's Isingiro district's elementary schools that get government support. This aligns with Parker et al. (2017) research that found a correlation between poor learning environments and poor primary school student performance. Usman and Madudili (2019) said that the learning environment has a significant role in getting the greatest academic performance.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In summary, working environment in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools impact staff performance and student completion rates, which affects how educational programs are carried out. This implies that for a nation like Uganda to create prosperity, its working environment must be improved. This has allowed nations like Finland to invest 100% of their GDP in universal primary education.

5.2 Recommendations

This paper makes the following recommendations:

1. Government and local authorities should provide adequate teaching and learning facilities, qualified teachers, and supervision of schools to ensure quality education.
2. The government should improve the funding of schools and sensitise parents and local communities on the importance of education and the need for their children to complete school.
3. Parents should be engaged and sensitised to provide moral, spiritual, and financial support and guidance to their children to complete school at primary seven.
4. The government, through the Ministry of Education & Sports, enact a minimum-wage law for government-aided primary school teachers' salaries, which may support teachers' motivation when given the proper consideration and care.
5. To improve the wellness and motivation of government-aided primary school teachers, the Ministry of Education & Sports should develop social advantages for them. Additionally, it is advised that instructors in government-aided elementary schools receive some benefits, including housing, health insurance, and transportation to help them stay motivated.
6. There is also a need for continuous training of teachers in pedagogical skills to match the current global demand in education systems, like the use of computer-aided learning to position students for the 4th industrial revolution.

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