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Inclusion as political mobilisation: The political economy of quality education initiatives in Uganda

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Abstract

Uganda has been successful in broadening access to education. However, this achievement has been undermined by low literacy and numeracy levels and high drop-out rates. A political settlement perspective sheds light on the politics of education reforms. We find that there are weak political drives to implement quality-enhancing policies, first, because the formal and informal governance arrangements allow for a system of decentralised rent management that serves to appease lower level factions. Secondly, the NRM government is caught in the rhetoric of allowing free education in an appeal to rural constituencies. Finally, there is relatively weak pressure to push through education quality-enhancing reforms, be it from civil society in general, powerful interest groups, or parliament. At the local level, we find that how a school is situated within local elite networks is important in explaining local-level variance in the quality of government primary school performance.

Keywords: Quality education, political settlement, political drivers, education reform, school performance, Uganda

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Acronyms

ADC	Area Development Committees
BPL	Below the poverty line
BRMS	Basic requirement and minimum standards
CBO	Community-based organisation
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CIPESA	Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa
COU	Church of Uganda
DCDO	District community development officer
DDP	District development plan
DEO	District education officer
DIP	District implementation plan
DIS	District inspector of schools
ESSP	Education sector strategic plan
FBO	Faith-based organisation
ICT	Information communication technology
LC	Local council
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoES	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports
MP	Member of parliament
NGO	Non-government organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PETS	Public expenditure tracking survey
PIU	Project implementation unit
PTA	Parent teachers' association
QEI	Quality enhancement initiative
RDC	Resident district commissioner
SMC	School management committee
TDMS	Teacher development and management system
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPE	Universal primary education
USE	Universal secondary education
VDC	Village development committee

1. Introduction

Uganda's success in broadening access to education is well documented (Ssewamala et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2015). The introduction of universal primary education (UPE) in 1996-97 was widely seen as a welcome break for poor parents, especially in the rural areas where the majority could not afford private schools or the charges levied in public schools by parent teacher associations (PTA) as the *de facto* school managers. Progressing from an estimated 3.1 million enrolled pupils in 1996 to 8.4 million in the 2013 school enrolment put Uganda on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets.

The achievements under UPE, however, have been undermined by low literacy and numeracy levels and high drop-out rates. In 2012, a large group of prominent Ugandans took to the streets to demand better conditions in government primary schools, launching an initiative they called *Citizens Action for Quality Primary Education*¹ in an attempt to create more momentum for improving child learning. UPE was touted as a presidential initiative and its failure to deliver quality education has frustrated the president, who at a cabinet ministers' retreat in March 2015 expressed rage about the high drop-out rates and was quoted as saying, "We should get an answer, and if you think it [UPE] needs to be restructured, we do that" (Mwesigwa, 2015).

The president's frustration with dismal quality indicators is shared by a cross-section of education stakeholders, including politicians, education practitioners, researchers, experts, the media and the general public in Uganda. But, despite the widespread consensus that the quality of primary education is poor, and despite several policy initiatives to address the issue, there is little progress so far in improving the quality of education. This paper offers a political settlement (PS) analysis of why this may be the case. There is an abundance of recent studies on education reforms in Uganda; some of these studies have examined problems of implementing reforms or have examined leakages at various levels of education expenditure (Reinikka and Suenson, 2004; Hubbard, 2007; Guloba, Magidu and Wokadala, 2010; UWEZO, 2012; Makaaru et.al., 2015). The logic of these studies has primarily been to document education expenditures, or to discuss how to improve conditions in the sector – increasing the efficiency with which services are delivered, reducing illiteracy and repetition rates, boosting student learning through new curricula and pedagogy, measuring the impact of standards-based testing, and evaluating the results of school autonomy. Other literature still has been focused on equity – particularly the achievement of gender parity in enrolment – as an important gain of the UPE initiative. Such studies are important, but tend not to examine drivers behind the education policy process. They do not deal with how improved education becomes part of a political agenda, or the politics behind how initiatives are developed, implemented and sustained once they are introduced. Hence, education is treated largely as *apolitical*, a social service that remains the preserve of government, to

¹ See, for example, *The Observer*, 'Bishop Niringiye worried about political transition', 26 February, 2012.

direct and provide for national development. Understanding the politics around education is necessary if we want to know why education reforms are often not fully implemented or sustained. This paper has a dual focus. First, we examine the political drivers of education reform in order to offer tentative explanations for the lack of quality improvements and, second, we want to understand the political economy factors explaining local-level variance in school performance.

A PS analysis allows us to understand the political incentives and interests behind education sector reforms. In addition, even if under the current political settlement there are no, or only weak, drivers of quality improvement policies, some variation in the quality of performance of government primary schools at the local level does occur. The second aim of the paper is therefore to attempt an explanation of this variation. We hypothesise that since under the current political settlement there is neither ability nor political pressure to provide for across-the-board improved quality of education, the variation in performance largely depends on *local contextual* factors, such as the wealth of the local government, or the strength of the local community. To the extent that school performance varies within local communities, it relates very much to the position of the school within local patronage networks, and the relation of the head teacher to local elites and politicians, in addition to the personal characteristics of school management.

2. The political settlement approach

Political settlement (PS) analysis focuses on the power relations that lie behind formal institutions, and categorises regimes according to how power is organised and exercised. From this starting point, PS analysis derives expectations about how economy and society are governed (Khan, 2010; 2012). A growing body of literature also uses PS analysis to explain developments in specific productive sectors (Whitfield et al., 2015; Hickey et al., 2015). However, the political settlements framework has so far only been used to a limited extent to explain social sector developments (Levy and Walton, 2013) or educational policies and outcomes (Hickey and Hossain, 2016).

The term 'political settlement' refers to the set of institutions and power relations characterising the social order in a particular country (Khan, 2010). The distribution of power in a country-specific political settlement shapes how ruling elites act and the policies they pursue. The point of departure for a political settlement analysis is to understand the organisation of power in society, i.e. the settlement, and how political stability is achieved within such a settlement (Khan, 2010; 2012). In the least developed countries, political stability cannot be achieved by reallocating resources, and hence appeasing powerful groups, from the national budget, simply because the budget is too limited. Hence, off-budget allocations are necessary in order to prevent powerful groups from leaving the coalition that supports the ruling elite, or in the worst case scenario, resorting to violence in order to challenge the regime (North et al., 2009; Khan, 2010). Off budget allocation may occur through rent flows, through

appointments to important positions, or through other ways of using state resources to secure political legitimacy (van de Walle, 2001).

There are different types of political settlements. The ESID political settlement framework distinguishes between and dominant settlements, depending on the degree of competition. A low degree of competition between powerful groups makes for a dominant coalition, which is better able to implement policies, particularly if it is more governed by rules than by personal relations (Levy and Walton, 2012). A high degree of competition characterises a *clientelist* settlement, especially if it is highly personalised. In the latter settlement, the implementation of programmatic policies is challenged by competitive pressures for the allocation of rents.

Some PS analysis fails to include the holding of elections as an important driver in the formulation and implementation of policies (Kjær and Therkildsen, 2013). However, as regular elections are institutionalised, they become important. They shape, as well as are shaped by, a country's political settlement; ruling elites have to consider how to win votes. For example, initiating a popular programme such as universal primary education may be one way to win votes. At the same time, ruling elites must please powerful groups. Elections can strengthen lower-level factions of the ruling coalitions, because ruling elites need these factions to mobilise votes (Kjær and Therkildsen, 2013). Hence, incorporating elections into hypotheses derived from PS theory is important to understanding the drivers for policy formulation and implementation in education.

A PS framework helps us understand the country-specific factors influencing the education sector. Obviously, there are also features that are not context dependent (Levy and Walton, 2012:13). Generally, the education sector needs trained teachers to provide quality education for all and its provision involves different levels of governance: central, local and school level. In most developing countries, one of the challenges that the education sector faces is monitoring education initiatives. Thus, it is easier to increase enrolments than to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Blimpo, 2012; Hickey and Hossain, 2016; Pritchett, 2013). As Blimpo notes, for many African countries, the real choice governments have faced is between 'quality education for some, or some education for all', in other words, the expansion of access may have caused the deterioration of the learning outcomes (Blimpo, 2012: 2). So, the education quality-related challenges Uganda is facing are not unique.

Uganda can be seen as a typical case of a clientelist settlement in a low-income country with the same challenges as other low-income countries when it comes to quality education. Uganda also faces some typical political pressures regarding the education sector: there are strong incentives for the ruling elite to focus on access rather than quality, because, like many other low-income African countries, the ruling coalition gets most of its support among the rural poor.

As can be seen from the tables below, Uganda shares some general education characteristics with other countries in Africa. However, there are also differences,

which a political settlement approach may help to shed light on. Uganda has performed better than most in terms of enrolment, and worse than many with regard to learning outcomes. Hence, Uganda scores very highly on enrolment and literacy, but not on pupil-teacher ratios and completion rates relative to the SSA-average. This indicates that Uganda has been highly successful in getting children to school and, to some extent, teaching them to read, but not getting them through to P7, which is the complete primary school cycle.

Table 1: Uganda education performance relative to SSA average

	Uganda	Sub-Saharan Africa, average
GNI per capita (current dollars)	600	1,694
Net enrolment rate	92	79
Pupil-teacher ratio	46	42
Literacy rate (2010)	73	59
Primary completion rate	54	69
Education expenditure (% of GNI)	3	3

Source: World Development Indicators.

It is clear that Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania all struggle with quality education, but relative to its neighbouring countries, Uganda struggles significantly more. For example, pass rates in Uganda in numeracy and English are at 38 percent for 10-16 year olds, while they are at 45 and 70 percent in Tanzania and Kenya, respectively. So, even if there are general challenges, we also need to find country-specific explanations as to why the quality of education has suffered to the extent it has in Uganda. Such explanations can arguably be found in Uganda's political settlement, which to a higher extent than neighbouring countries is characterised by a combination of 'dominant coalition' with 'decentralised clientelism', which is likely to render the provision of quality education even more difficult in Uganda than in Kenya or Tanzania.

A political settlement approach would also point to the strength of and competition between lower-level factions in Uganda, combined with the very heavy reliance on rural support, as explaining these differences from the East African neighbours. In addition, the particular way in which educational initiatives play out is likely to depend on the type of political settlement. Levy and Walton (2013) develop hypotheses by combining the type of settlement with sector. For instance, a competitive and *personalistic* settlement combined with a complex sector such as education, with many opportunities for 'leakage' and informal rent flows, is not conducive to the

Table 2: Uganda education performance compared to Tanzania and Kenya

	Uganda	Tanzania	Kenya
Gross enrolment rates, primary, male and female, 2009 (UNESCO)	130	90	105
Pass rates numeracy and English combined (ages 10-16), 2012 (UWEZO)	38	45	70
Primary completion rate, 2009 (UNESCO)	53	58	85
Percent grade 6 pupils reaching level 5 difficulty in reading, 2009 (UNESCO)	16	25	22
Percent grade 6 pupils reaching above level 4 (basic reading ability), 2007 (UNESCO)	55	90	80

Sources: UWEZO, East Africa and UNESCO data at:

<http://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/eastafrica.pdf>

provision of quality education for all. In this paper, we work with these assumptions as they may apply to Uganda, and tentatively apply them to the education sector nationally as well as locally. In order to do so, we start with an outline of Uganda's political settlement in relation to education over time before we go on to explore variations in school performance at the local level.

We rely on a careful reading of existing data and information on the education sector in Uganda, as well as on 22 key informant interviews at the national level with members of parliament, Ministry of Education officials, education NGOs; researchers on education and teachers' union representatives, as well as 29 interviews with district officials, local councillors, head teachers, teachers and NGOs in the two districts of Mayuge and Mukono. The purpose of including the local government level in our analysis was twofold: we wanted to uncover how government policies on free education and quality initiatives were interpreted and implemented on the ground; and we also wanted to explore potential differences in school and local government performance. We elaborate on the choice of district and what we did while visiting district in Section 4. One of the authors' longstanding research on, and knowledge of, the education sector was also a source of information as well as both authors' previous work on Ugandan politics and the political settlement in the country.

3. Uganda's political settlement and education over time

3.1 1962-1986: post-independence coalition building and the taking over of education

At independence in 1962, Milton Obote, the head of the largely protestant Uganda People's Congress (UPC) party and an ethnic Langi from Northern Uganda, constructed a coalition based on an alliance with the Kabaka Yekka (the Buganda kings movement). The alliance was primarily made possible because of their common religious affiliation – Protestantism, which was about the only thing the two had in common, being divided on the more difficult issues such as land rights and ethnic differences. Northerners, under the British protectorate, were primarily recruited as soldiers in the army, whereas the British provided the Baganda with an education and subsequently recruited them as civil servants, creating a myriad of cleavages that made cohesion and political coalition building difficult.

Prior to independence, when the financing of education was largely in the hands of religious bodies, school administrators relied on the financial support of communities and conformed to the churches' machinery of consultation in decision making (Fagil Monday, 1997; Father Kasibante, 1996; Passi, 1995; Senteza-Kajubi 1997; Muwonge-Keweza, 1997; interviews in Muwanga, 1999).² At independence, the educational system was divided along religious and racial lines. The three main religious bodies (the [Protestant] Church of Uganda (CoU), the Roman Catholic Church (RC), and the Uganda Muslim Education Authority (UMEA), had their own schools. In addition to several privately owned schools, members of the Asian community, (Hindus, Muslim Ismailis, Sikhs, and Roman Catholic Goanese), had their own schools that catered to their religious and cultural interests. When education was nationalised in 1963, the state extended its monopoly over education through hierarchical and bureaucratized structures that were replicated within the schools. These structures undermined the involvement of parents, communities and religious bodies in schools, particularly at the decision-making level. The government assumed responsibility for education policy, financing and administration, and the local-level missionary boards of education were replaced by district education officers (DEOs). Within the schools, school management committees (SMCs) were established to represent government interests and enforce government policies. The new government rested on a fragile alliance. The rationale for centralising education in the immediate post-independence period was the new government's desire to consolidate itself through controlling education and hence preferring uniformity and equality of access. The state's monopoly of education thus rested on the assumption that the state had the capacity to finance and manage education. While, in principle, the changes made the state the main source of educational policy and administration, in practice the state continued to rely on the financial contribution of communities, religious bodies and parents to expand educational facilities (Senteza-Kajubi, 1997; Muwonge-Keweza, 1997).

² Mr Fagil Monday, Father Kasibante, Professor Senteza-Kajubi and Mr Muwonge-Keweza were all interviewed in 1996-97 by the author for her doctoral thesis (Muwanga, 1999).

Religious and ethnic tensions that were already evident in the country became amplified by the government's move to gain greater control over education. However, religious resistance to educational reforms on the part of Protestant and Catholic religious bodies tended to generate the most conflict with central government. Welbourn notes that on the eve of independence, religious conflict among the religious denominations was so pronounced that: Protestants, Catholics and Muslims educated in separate schools tended to regard one another not as fellow citizens of one nation, but as members of different communities, each rivalling the other for power, wealth and status (1965: 30). Education, in short, both reflected and reinforced pre-existing social and political differentiation. Moreover, in promising to provide equal education opportunity in education, the first post-independence administration was co-opting education as a tool for consolidating and legitimising its power. The stated objectives of the Education Act of 1963, which, in effect, nationalised education, were threefold: national unity; human resource development; and the *Africanisation* of the education system. The Act gave government direct control over all religious and racially segregated schools, the principal aim being to put an end to the sectarian divisions in education. Authorities argued that the practice of dedicating separate schools for different population groups both duplicated the work of teachers and stretched the country's limited resources. It might also be argued that, in light of the events that precipitated the constitutional crisis in 1966, there was an underlying political logic to the reform, namely, a desire to reduce Buganda's monopoly over education and its political, economic and social rewards. Educational opportunities that typically had favoured the Buganda region were regarded as contrary to the government's efforts to forge a unified state out of Uganda's cultural pluralism (Khadiagala, 1995; Apter, 1995; Bogonko, 1992). Be that as it may, the extensive educational reforms the government had designed to support its political goals of nationalism and equality were by no means universally embraced, in part because the *clientelist* nature of the settlement had gradually undermined the state's capacity to implement them.

The alliance between the Kabaka Yekka and the UPC soon proved unstable, and collapsed in 1966. The Obote government lost its parliamentary majority, which made it rely more on the army, a development which was largely responsible for the coup in 1971 and Idi Amin's rise to power. Like his predecessor, Idi Amin's rule faced coalitional pressures, and this combined with an economic crisis precipitated by the expulsion of Asians and expropriation of their properties in a populist move, which quickly eroded the state's capacity to implement programmes and deliver services during the 1970s. The state's inability to provide primary education left an administrative vacuum. The prior existence of a framework for participation in schools on the part of non-state interests (albeit without decision-making powers) provided an entry point for PTAs to extend their involvement in schools in response to the political and economic crises of the 1970s and early 1980s (Nabuguzi, 1995; Senteza-Kajubi, 1997). By 1985, PTAs, as a result of contributing between 70 and 85 percent of the recurrent expenditure in schools, were the locus of educational financing and management (World Bank, 1990; Senteza-Kajubi, 1997). This financial involvement

of PTAs in schools extended the power of parents and religious groups over the financing and administrative functions previously assigned to the state (Senteza-Kajubi, 1989; Government of Uganda, 1992). As a consequence, PTAs achieved an institutionalised stability within the school system that significantly altered the power relationship within schools, and between the state and society, in the provision of education (Senteza-Kajubi, 1989; Muwanga, 1999). PTAs, which effectively ran schools prior to 1996, were thus credited with upholding a collapsing system affected by the political turmoil in the country in the 1970s and 1980s.

3.2 1986-2006: post-civil war coalition building; taking over education from parents

Uganda's political settlement under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) can be characterised as 'dominant', in the sense that it is difficult to remove President Museveni and his ruling National Resistance Movement from power. President Museveni and the NRM have ruled Uganda since they took power in 1986 after waging a bush war against the Obote regime in the aftermath of the 1980 elections. The NRM built on an alliance between south-western and central Buganda factions, primarily from the previous kingdoms of Ankole and Buganda (Goodfellow and Lindemann, 2013). This alliance has all but fallen apart, despite a recent rapprochement with Buganda. Some important factions have left or been excluded from the ruling coalition, and in recent times the withdrawal of key military personalities, such as retired Colonel Besigye (Leader of Forum for Democratic Change – FDC) and Major Tinyefunza, suggests that some army factions may have withdrawn their support. The remaining ruling coalition is more narrowly based, which has made the ruling elite rely increasingly on the army.

President Museveni and the NRM won elections under a no-party system in 1996 and 2001. In 2006, constitutional presidential term limits were lifted allowing the president to run and win the elections under a multi-party system in 2006 with a decrease in the margin against the opposition. In the 2011 election win, the electoral margin increased, explained in part by an increase of support in the North, where since 2006 peace had been restored. In the recently concluded elections, February 2016, the president again won the elections, but the margin has again decreased (60 percent for Museveni; 35 percent for the main opposition candidate, Besigye) (Kjær and Therkildsen, 2013; Golaz and Medard, 2014; Kiggundu, 2016). The NRM regime's support remains strongest among the rural and poorer majority of the population and not among the wealthier educated and urban voters (Kiiza, 2014).

Winning elections by a big majority has been an important concern to the regime, because a narrow margin would make the opposition a credible threat and could induce lower-level factions to leave the coalition to join the opposition. The 2011 and the 2016 elections showed the opposition as weak and disorganised compared to the ruling party, which is relatively better organised and better resourced (Golaz and Medard, 2014; Kiiza, 2014). The ruling NRM elite has also taken several measures to weaken the opposition, such as continuously arresting the main opposition

candidate. Elections have also strengthened lower-level groups of the ruling coalitions, such as local army units, local council chairpersons, and local NRM chairmen. The role of lower-level political units is important in the mobilisation of votes at that level (Kjær and Therkildsen, 2013). In the lead-up to the 2016 elections, this was increasingly seen as key in mobilising supporters and, where necessary, co-opting opposition supporters using financial and other incentives. The NRM primaries in October 2015 were very competitive and characterised by violence, whereas the national elections were relatively peaceful, due partly to the presence of a massive security apparatus.

Therefore, even if the settlement is 'dominant', local factions do have power, and if the coalition is to be maintained, policies which run against powerful lower-level factions are not likely to be implemented (Kjær, 2015). In addition, even if opposition is relatively weak, excluded factions do have some power and constitute enough of a threat to the regime to raise the cost of staying in power; a phenomenon Joel Barkan (2011) has labelled 'inflationary patronage'. Money is important, in order to keep factions from joining the opposition. However financial incentives are not the only means by which the coalition is maintained. Government programmes that can be used to appease lower-level interest groups are also important. For example, the agricultural extension reform programme was used, not only to give advice to farmers, but also as a source of patronage (Kjær, 2015). Another important way by which these lower-level factions are kept 'in the fold' is by being allowed to use their positions to derive advantages and resources, so-called 'decentralised rent-management' (Khan, 2010; Booth, 2012). Decentralised rent management often takes place in settlements with strong lower-level groups; these groups can then derive rents from their positions in lower-level governments, or in various line ministries or the army.

Prior to 1997, the school system in Uganda had not been reformed since the near collapse of government functions in the 1970s and 80s. As explained, schools were primarily run by parents through PTAs, and government had limited capacity to provide direction (Hubbard, 2007; Makaanu, et.al., 2015). Parents' contributions went towards school maintenance and included partial support to teachers' salaries. Although government tuition fees were low, PTA dues resulted in poor parents not being able to enrol all (or any) of their children in school.

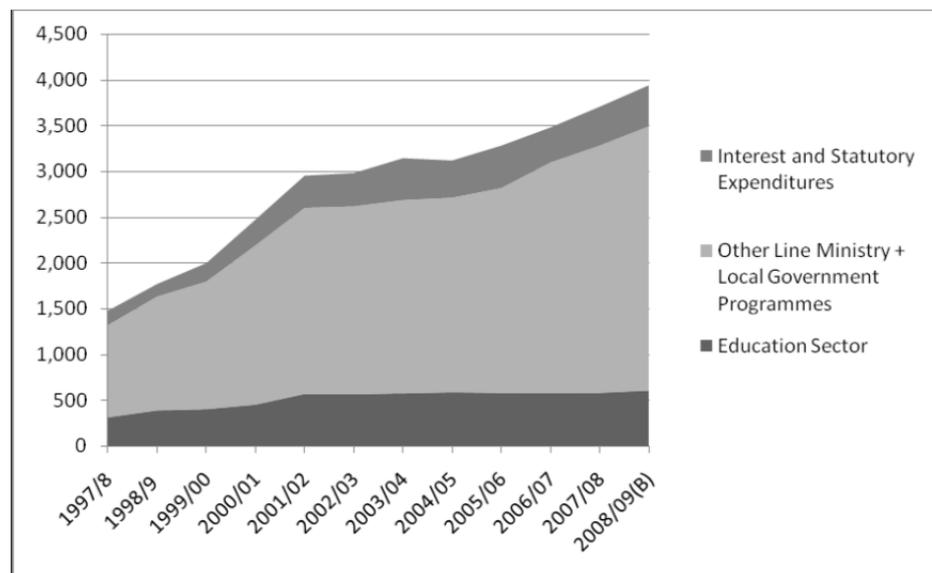
The NRM in 1986 had promised to build a broad-based movement system, built on inclusion and equality. Central to the rapid reforms the NRM introduced in the public sector and the economy was the need to rebuild the education sector to make it more accessible and equitable. The 1989 Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC), 'Education for National Integration and Development', and the 1992 government white paper on education provided the basis for the introduction of UPE in 1996. UPE fitted in well with the government's egalitarian and inclusive agenda. More importantly, however, it was a way of gaining control over an important social service that people identified with progress and social mobility. Providing free education meant reasserting centralised control over education and thus curbing the perceived

influence of PTAs, largely populated by the more well-to-do parents, which had effectively appropriated the delivery of education services.

In 1996, the NRM government pledged to provide UPE, and in 1997, the NRM abolished school fees and promised free education to a guaranteed four children per family. After 1997, significant increases in funding for implementing the UPE programme occurred with the support of another significant player in the education system – donors. With the help, especially of the World Bank, the number of schools and primary school teachers increased (Hubbard, 2007; Kjær and Therkildsen, 2013; Stasavage, 2004).

Figure 1 shows the Ministry of Finance’s data on education as part of public expenditure as it is reported in Hedger et Al. (2010). As can be seen, substantial allocations for education took place after 1996 when UPE was introduced, but then education expenditure has stagnated since about 2002.

Figure 1: Education sector expenditure relative to other public expenditure 1997-2009



Source: Hedger et al. (2010).

The largest proportion of this expenditure (about 80 percent) went on the expansion of primary school enrolment, with most of it between 1997 and 2002 used to cover the wage bill for the recruitment of new teachers (Guloba, Magidu and Wokadala, 2010; Makaanu, et al., 2015). The result was that enrolment rates significantly increased as poor parents were able to send their children to school. In 1986, the net enrolment rate was 57 percent. By 2013, net enrolment rate had risen to 92 percent. The most substantial increase in enrolment took place between 1996 and 2003, from about 2.5 million children in 1996 to 7.5 million in 2003, and then gradually up to 11 million in 2012 (Hedger et al., 2010; UBOS, 2014). In 2003, the Ugandan government, satisfied with its increases in social expenditure, decided to abandon

the policy of one-to-one 'additionality' with donor sector support (Hedger et.al., 2010: 32) which is reflected in the figure as an evening out of the curve for education sector expenditure after 2002.

Significant financial support from donors, including DFID, the World Bank, The Netherlands, Irish Aid, and Sida, since 1997 created the resource base needed to roll out the UPE programme and to reach UPE targets (Penny, et.al., 2008; Hedger et al., 2010). As observed in an evaluation of the education sector support for education:

"The substantial funding channelled to the education sector through Sector Budget Support and imputed shares of General Budget Support (GBS) was used principally to boost capacity in the education sector to deliver UPE targets" (Hedger et al., 2010: x).

The implementation of UPE from 1997 onwards not only fitted into the NRM's political agenda, it also fitted in with the poverty reduction strategies emphasised by development partners and the Millennium Development Goals in the making. This 'fit' between the ruling NRM elite, the donors, and the rural poor formed a formidable policy coalition for universal access, which is not evident in the support for quality improvement.

In addition to the substantial funds provided by different donor agencies, donors played a key role in setting the parameters of the UPE policy, including levels of accountability. However, accountability at different levels was limited by the government's relatively tight grip on most aspects of UPE, rapidly politicising it as a presidential programme. It is therefore not surprising that the government's move to "equalise" education though UPE was welcomed by many, although the subsequent attempts to ban teachers topping up their salary through private tuition and to abolish PTA fees drew varied reactions among parents, teachers and pupils that provided some insight into the tension between government interests and the interests of parents and teachers in education.

For example, in a parody on the obituary messages often posted in national newspapers, a teacher letter in the Monitor newspaper in 1996 lamented the passing away of the PTA:

In Loving Memory of PTA: This letter is in loving memory of Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) fund who died on June 15 1996. It is now two months since you were mercilessly murdered. We remember your mercy of more than ten years. It's a pity your untimely death came at a time before your heir *Living Wage* is mature.

Fondly remembered by: Your chairman and headteachers, who used to be in charge of you; teachers, whom you used to visit once a month; parents, who always looked for money every term; pupils,

whose teachers came to class because of you; friends and in-laws (Drissa Mawanda, Ahmadinua Primary School – *The Monitor*, Friday August 16, 1996: 4 in Muwanga, 1999).

The political dividends of the UPE initiative were clear; any service improvement, such as expanding access to education to those previously disadvantaged, would be credited to the NRM government, whose popularity would increase as a result. The introduction of UPE and the abolishment of school fees also coincided with the country's first elections under the new constitution, and UPE became an important campaign pledge for the government (Stasavage, 2004; Kjær and Therkildsen, 2013). Thus, the public funding that was pumped into the primary education sector after 1996 was basically to improve access (such as payment of capitation grants, building schools, or recruiting teachers), with little attention paid to the quality of education (such as improving inspection and monitoring, curricular activities, provision of materials or training teachers). Although the country was still operating under a no party system, the President used UPE as part of his election pledge in the 1996 elections, making it very much part of his political agenda (Muwanga, 1999; Stasavage, 2004). Implementing the UPE programme was about making good on that election pledge that had struck a chord with voters. The abolition of the PTA's financial contributions in schools effectively signalled a fundamental change in the power relations between the government, school management and parents; the NRM and President Museveni specifically could take credit for broadening access and the inclusive delivery of education services (Muwanga, 1999).

What is puzzling, and may serve as an argument against the hypothesis about UPE being driven by elections, is that the majority of Ugandans are actually in favour of paying school fees (Bratton, 2007). As reported by Michael Bratton (2007), support for a policy of tuition fees is highest in countries where people are accustomed to paying for education, as in Ghana (74 percent). By contrast, a majority of people prefer universal free education in those countries wherever this policy prevails: for example Tanzania (56 percent) or Kenya (51 percent). Uganda constitutes an intriguing exception: despite the availability of free primary education since 1996, a barely changing minimum of 55 percent of Ugandans, in 1999, 2002 or 2005, endorsed the payment of school fees (Bratton, 2007: 44).

This in part can be explained by the fact that people over the years have become accustomed to paying fees when, due to years of political turmoil, the state was absent in service provision. It is also partly due to a popular perception that payment of fees, whether for health or education, is a guarantee of better services, despite evidence to the contrary.

The explanation of why the NRM government continues to campaign for free education, in spite of the fact that more than half of the population is in favour of paying tuition fees, may thus be that it is the poor majority of the population that counts to the ruling elite. This point tallies with Stephen Kosack's argument about the real drivers of governments' policy decisions. He argues that to stay in power

governments that need the support of the poor majority make very different policy choices from those that need the support of wealthy citizens. Where the government education policy targets the poor majority, it is likely to focus on broadening access, because the poor are unable to afford any form of education (Kosack, 2012). For the majority of poor families, particularly those in rural areas, what is important is being able to send their children to school, regardless of what or how much they learn while they are at school.³

On average, the hidden costs of educating a child (including school uniform, scholastic materials and a contribution to the school development) can be as high as Ugs. 250,000/= (approx. \$90) per year. This amount increases in the case of those students who opt to board at school in addition to the cost of other requirements. The table below shows the rates for day (non-boarding) and boarding schooling per term:

Table 3: Average school requirements in private primary schools

	Day	Boarding
1.	58,000 (approx. \$23.2)	156,000 (approx. \$62.4)
2.	120,000 (approx. \$48)	420,000 (approx. \$168)
3.	152,000 (approx. \$60.8)	260,000 (approx. \$104)
4.	160,000 (approx. \$64)	300,000 (approx. \$120)
5.	185,000 (approx. \$74)	340,000 (approx. 136)

Source: Findings from ISER's right to education monitoring work in *Alternative Report Submitted by the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights and the Global Initiative for Social and Economic Rights*.

In contrast, policies that target wealthier families, particularly in urban areas who can afford primary education, would focus on more affordable higher education and other forms of incentives for higher education (Kosack, 2012). In any case, it is assumed that the middle class is more than likely to vote against the ruling elite. It is therefore not surprising that it is the majority of the poorest part of the population that counts to the NRM government. For the more well-off and educated Ugandan parents, however, a quality education is important, and hence those who can afford it send their children to private schools.⁴ It is these parents who have increasingly voted with their feet since UPE was introduced and exited the government system in search of a quality education. However, the middle class remains relatively small compared to the rural majority who constitute 80 percent of Uganda's population and therefore their exit is less important to the ruling elite in terms of votes. With tight budget constraints, a visible enrolment programme yielding tangible results in terms of access is thus a more attractive proposition.

In sum, the political drivers of the NRM government's roll-out of fee-free primary

³ Interview with education researcher, Kampala, January 2015.

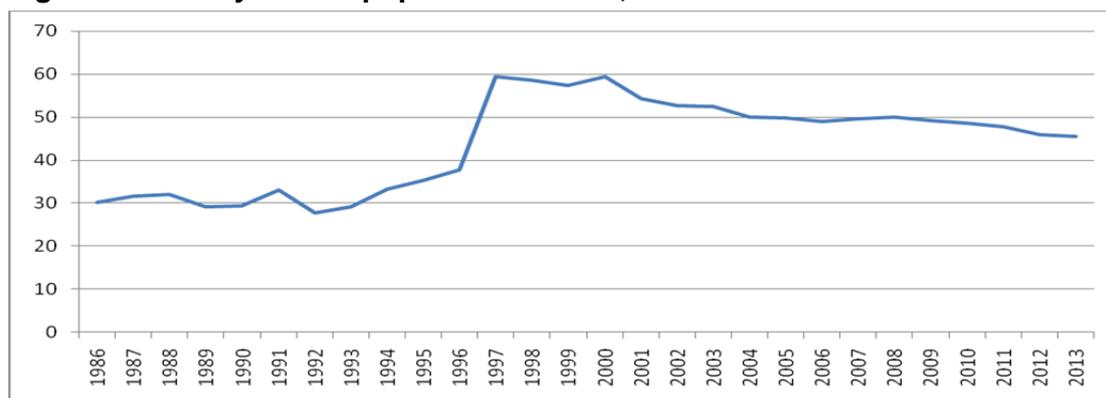
⁴ Currently, 27 percent of schools at primary level and 66 percent of schools at secondary level are private. As of 2013, the private school enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment was 16.2 percent and 51.0 percent at primary and secondary levels, respectively (*Alternative Report Submitted by the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights and the Global Initiative for Social and Economic Rights*, p.9).

education was to enhance support among the rural poor majority and at the same time to be able to take credit for the expansion of education.

3.3. After 2006: coalition building and ad-hoc attempts to improve quality

Literacy rates rose as more children were enrolled, but not nearly as much as would have been expected, given that there were many more children attending school. The literacy rate was 56 in 1991 and 73 in 2010 (World Bank, 2015). However, the Uganda National Household Survey reports that literacy rates declined from 71 percent in 2010 to 68 percent in 2013 (UBOS, 2014). Multiple assessment reports reveal that the increase in quantity has not been accompanied by an improvement in the quality of education, despite the increased allocations to the sector (Guloba, Magidu and Wokadala, 2010; Hubbard, 2007; Makaru et al., 2015; UWEZO, 2012). These observations are backed by various statistics. For example, despite employment of teachers and increased expenditure for salaries, the pupil-teacher ratio increased after the introduction of UPE and has since then only declined slightly.

Figure 3: Primary school pupil-teacher ratio, 1986-2013.



Source: *World Development Indicators* online (2012 number is a calculated average of the 2011 and 2013 figures).

The proportion of children studying up to Primary 5 has also not increased. It was 48 percent in 1986, and in 2013 was still 48 percent, according to the World Development Indicators database (2015).⁵ This means that the proportion of children passing the primary leaving exams is low. The government has introduced automatic promotion, which means that children can go on to the next grade without passing tests. However, UWEZO Uganda,⁶ an East African Education NGO which carries out regular assessments of the status of primary education in the country, estimates that as much as 37 percent of P7 pupils nationwide are not able to read a P2 story

⁵ Available at: <http://archive.data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators/wdi-2015>.

⁶ Uwezo means 'capability' in Kiswahili. Uwezo was initially a five-year initiative which has been consolidated into an organization that aims to improve competencies in literacy and numeracy among children aged 6-16 years old in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, by using an innovative approach to social change that is citizen driven and accountable to the public (www.uwezo.net)

(UWEZO, 2012: 22). In all, UWEZO finds that only three out of 10 children in P3-P7 were able to read and understand a P2 level story (ibid: 13).

With such dismal literacy figures, the government has acknowledged that the quality of education is poor in UPE schools. The 2005 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) for the fiscal years 2004/5 to 2014/5 focused on increasing and improving equitable access to quality education. In the last decade, the government has introduced a number of initiatives to address the quality deficit in schools, including the introduction of a thematic curriculum and measures to improve the provision of instructional materials at all levels of the education system. In addition, the government has committed itself to building teachers' houses, particularly in rural areas, as one way of stemming teacher attrition in those areas, as well as to strengthening training and in-service support to teachers (RoU, 2008: 4). In the mid-1990s, a 'teacher development and management system' (TDMS) was set up to provide pre-service and in-service training through 539 primary school centres across the country and centre tutors from 23 primary teacher colleges (PTC) (USAID, 2003). However, evaluations of the TDMS in 2003 suggested that the system and the PTCs were inadequately staffed and funded, which undermined their overall contribution to improving the quality of education (USAID, 2003: 6).

As the government's financial allocations remained low, the education sector largely relied on the support of development partners. For example, the USAID-supported UNITY programme, launched in 2006, focused on quality and had a large teacher training component that also sought to strengthen the TDMS (USAID, 2008). Similarly, the 2010 'Quality Improvement in Primary Schools through Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS) Implementation' programme supported by UNICEF sought to support the TDMS and the school inspectorate function. Another initiative, supported by Oxfam and the teachers' union, is the Quality Educators for All Programme that focused on developing competence profiles for teachers and targeted Northern Uganda. These initiatives, however, have so far not resulted in any significant improvements in the quality of primary education or learning outcomes. Arguably since 2006, the political emphasis has been on expanding the UPE programme into secondary education by universalising secondary education to absorb the UPE bulge, rather than substantively improving the quality of primary education. In the 2006 elections campaigns, the first multi-party elections under the NRM government, universal secondary education (USE) featured strongly in President Museveni's campaign (Werner, 2011; Hedger et al., 2010). However, according to the teachers' union, this has resulted in automatic class promotion, which is largely responsible for students completing the seven-year cycle without attaining the required literacy and numeracy competency levels (UNATU, 2013). In addition, after 2003, a larger proportion of donor funding went to the Uganda Post- Primary Education and Training Program (UPPET), a programme that also focused on secondary education and vocational training (Hedger et al., 2010).

According to our PS framework, we point to three explanations as to why policy initiatives to enhance quality have not been politically prioritised or fully implemented:

- (i) The formal and informal governance arrangements allow for a system of decentralised rent management that serves to appease lower level factions.
- (ii) The NRM government is caught in the rhetoric of allowing free education in an appeal to rural constituencies.
- (iii) There is relatively weak pressure to push through education quality-enhancing reforms, be it from civil society in general, powerful interest groups, or parliament.

(i) Formal and informal governance arrangements allow decentralised rent management

Appendix A shows the governance arrangements in the education sector in two figures indicating roles and responsibilities and the flows of funds. As can be seen in Figure 1, the management and provision of basic education in Uganda is largely in the hands of the district administration. Central government, through the Ministry of Education and Sports, is responsible for setting policy and standards, teacher education, developing the curriculum and assessment. The main objectives of decentralisation were to generate locally relevant solutions, and enhance flexibility, transparency and accountability in the delivery of education and other services. The minister of education with the overall responsibility for developments is assisted by three ministers of state responsible for primary education, higher education and sports. In addition, commissioners head the seven technical departments in the ministry, all except education planning are answerable to the director of education. The support sections of accounts, personnel and administration operate under the undersecretary for finance and administration, who reports directly to the permanent secretary. At the district level, the chief administrative officer (CAO) is responsible for monitoring and ensuring full implementation of all government programmes. The CAO is expected to contribute to the development of education policies, setting up and supervising performance of education departments, supervising the construction of schools and mobilising communities to send children to school. At the school level, the headteacher and the school management committee (SMC) were supposed to support the UPE programme by mobilising communities to send and keep children in schools and, more importantly, to monitor the work of teachers.

While the formal arrangements seem to be adequate, in reality, the monitoring systems are weak, with several points of leakage. The often-cited public expenditure study by Reinikka and Svensson (2004) showed that the publication of releases of capitation grants for schools greatly decreased leakages, as did the transfer of capitation grants into designated district accounts. However, there is evidence that some of these gains have been eroded over time (Hubbard, 2007). In addition, the multiplication of districts, itself a materialisation of decentralised rent management, has served to undermine the districts' financial, as well as monitoring and inspection capacity, which also opens up possibilities for abuses of the system (Green, 2010).

Funds are allocated directly to schools from central government, and salaries paid directly to teachers. However, it is widely estimated that there is considerable leakage of resources at several levels. The leakage that occurs between central government and school is widely through payment of 'ghost teachers' and the misuse of UPE grants at the district level. Also, local councillors and district officials may use their discretion to, for example, allocate teachers or grant licences to set up private schools.⁷ Within schools, leakages occur due to high rates of absenteeism by pupils, teachers and head teachers. Such leakages would be expected in a settlement characterised by decentralised rent management. In addition to the central transfers, at the district level, a school facilitation grant may be allocated if the district government has its own revenue sources. According to the regulations, the district is responsible for allocating school facilities grants. The technical team led by the CAO and the district planner agrees on priority sites following a critical analysis of school work plans and reports from monitoring and inspection visits (Makaaru et al., 2015). But in practical terms, the capacity of local governments to carry out such functions has been weakened by the multiplication of districts⁸ that are generally underfunded and lack the human resources to undertake the needed analyses for prioritisation.

The increase in the number of districts has increased public administration expenditures and presented a particular challenge for new local governments, which lack staff, offices, and equipment to carry out basic functions (Kjær and Katusiimeh, 2012). As a result, the districts often lack capacity to carry out the required inspection and monitoring of schools. The district council's technical planning committees and education sector committees provide citizens and CSOs with an opportunity to participate in education planning, and budgeting at the local level. The district education office appoints school management committees, which are also supposed to be representative of different education stakeholders. Our general finding in the two local governments we visited suggests that there is a lack of capacity and that education inspectors' monitoring and inspection functions are especially under-prioritised.⁹ In both Mukono (the high performing district) and Mayuge (a low performing district), the inspectorate was evidently underfunded, with insufficient staff and no means of transport to inspect the large number of schools under their control. As an interviewee from the Principals' Association of Uganda (PAU) put it:

“it is as if we currently have three governments: a national government, local government, and local governments have a district and the sub-counties. These systems are too weak and uncoordinated to hold the people accountable at the school level. The support supervision at the grassroots is too weak.” (Interview, May 2015.)

A system of decentralised rent management is by definition characterised by weak monitoring and space for leakage of funds.

⁷ Interview, the principals' organisation, May, 2015.

⁸ This trend is widely perceived to be driven by the need to gain and consolidate the NRM's electoral support (Green, 2010).

⁹ Interviews, Mayuge and Mukono district officers, May and June, 2015.

One way to strengthen governance arrangements would be to politically prioritise designated departments for quality within the Ministry of Education. These departments could then initiate measures to improve the quality of teaching and learning, which requires a variety of initiatives that target teachers, learners, school managers and parents. These would typically focus on teacher recruitment and training, the monitoring and evaluation of teachers, increasing community participation, as well as other school-based initiatives, such as school feeding programmes to address the neediest students.

However, there is no department within the MOE which has been empowered to do so.¹⁰ While the latest education sector investment plan emphasises the need to improve the quality of education, it does not clearly spell out what aspects of quality are to be addressed, nor does it detail the measures needed, including the source of the substantial funds required to implement sustained quality improvement programmes. According to a Ministry of Education official, “What happens in terms of initiatives in quality is largely accidental and depends on whether there is a donor project”.¹¹ The minister of education, until recently, was a former army officer and was seen as an NRM party loyalist, but one who did not have the required clout to instigate and implement the much-needed quality policy initiatives. Furthermore, according to a number of interviewees, both within and outside of the ministry in organisations that had close dealing with the Ministry of Education, she was viewed as largely uncooperative with key MOE staff, which might explain her recent exit from the ministry.¹²

The sector-wide approach in support of the sector is credited with assisting the Ministry of Education to build its implementation capacity. However, evaluation reports and interviews suggest that the ministry currently lacks a strong implementation agency that is capable of pushing for quality enhancement initiatives. The lack of progress with quality improvements and educational attainment, due the continued prioritisation of access over quality, has frustrated development partners, who have started to withdraw from sector support in order to support projects and programmes that enhance quality (Hedger et al., 2010).¹³ There are, however, a number of other donors who did not participate in sector budget support (SBS) in the first place – such as JICA, USAID, GIZ – and these and other international aid organisations continue to provide off-budget project aid (JICA, 2012).

Initiatives to improve monitoring and evaluation systems are likely, if they work, to cut away possibilities of decentralised rent management and thus remove a way to achieve support among lower-level political groups. In an evaluation of sector support, Hedger et al. (2010: xi) observe that where sector budget support (SBS) succeeded in supporting the achievement of UPE targets, SBS has been less

¹⁰ Interview, Ministry of Education, January 2015.

¹¹ Interview, Ministry of Education, January 2015.

¹² In the new cabinet lineup following the recent February 2016 elections, Rtd. Col. Jessica Alupo has been replaced by Mrs. Janet Museveni as Minister of Education and Sports.

¹³ In 2010, the only donor continuing with budget support for education was Irish Aid.

successful in strengthening accountability for financial management and service delivery at district and lower local levels. By prioritising central government stakeholders, and by viewing service delivery exclusively in terms of MoES principals and school-level agents, the political economy of delivery has been insufficiently acknowledged and the role of the DEO has been weakened.

The fragmentation and competition between especially lower-level factions within and outside the ruling coalition tend to undermine the government's capacity to implement. The decentralised rent management this necessitates enables the 'leakages' which weaken the capacity of the education sector. The Ministry of Education, and particularly its departments that work with quality enhancement, have not been strategically important in a situation where resources are scarce and short-term political considerations to keep the faction together overrule long-term investments. Investing in quality education is arguably risky, because its returns are uncertain and are only likely to emerge in the long run.

(ii) The NRM government is caught in the rhetoric of allowing free education in an appeal to rural constituencies

Substantial investments are required to improve the quality of education compared to quantitative expansion. In addition to the financial investment to recruit, train, monitor and evaluate teachers, the government would need to address other structural issues. For example, the curriculum would have to be overhauled to make it more relevant, school environments made secure, particularly for girls for whom insecurity in schools contributes to absenteeism, as well as addressing the lack of leadership and management skills among the majority of school managers. The comprehensive reforms needed would arguably require the re-introduction of some form of user fees for parents. This would threaten the government's base political support and weaken its electoral advantage.

Interestingly, there is a widespread practice already to demand contributions from parents, as this appears to be the way in which government schools manage to attract teachers and perhaps provide a meal for the children. The government's lack of progress on quality has meant that solutions to quality deficiencies in schools have largely been left to the innovation of districts and school administrators. District and school responses to the decline in quality of education present an interesting departure from the UPE policy as it was introduced and has been implemented for more than two decades. There is a popular argument that parents misunderstood their role under UPE; this has given rise to its creative re-interpretation at the level of implementation. For example, although government made it clear from the outset that SMCs were to assume all functions previously carried out by parents in schools, local leadership and school administrators are again increasingly relying on parents to make financial contributions to ensure that schools function.

For the most part, the directive that parents should not make financial contributions in school has been ignored and, in practice, local leaders are actively mobilising

parents to financially support schools. Furthermore, parents' financial contributions have facilitated linkages with local political leadership to affect the sort of changes parents want in their schools. The result is an unofficial cost-sharing policy that is not officially condoned, but in practice is allowed to continue: "We're encouraging the lower councils to come up with very good by-laws and they're coming up with them. But at the same time, the laws are not looking into that" (interview, political leaders, Mayuge, May, 2015). The by-laws enable parents to financially contribute to school by providing food, contributing to teachers' houses, paying for extra tutorials or for a boarding facility at the school.

The NRM government tacitly condones such practices, but in election time does not want to readdress the issue of cost-sharing. An education official narrated how the Ministry of Education, together with the ministry of finance and economic development (MoFPED), prepared a white paper on quality education that included a user fee, which never made it to cabinet out of fear that it would not have the president's political support.¹⁴

Once the president had pledged free education, he could not go back on it, because this would have meant abandoning a pledge to poorer parents and recognising the government's inability to uphold its promises. The idea of free education services remains popular among a large section of the population, particularly in rural areas. While it has become increasingly clear that UPE is not entirely free, contrary to the general perception, local leaders, such as sub-country chairmen who are predominantly members of the NRM and are important in terms of political mobilisation, continue to promote it as a free service. The government is aware that cost-sharing by parents in schools is already practised to meet the hidden costs of education under UPE. The government is also aware that the schools that perform well rely on the support and input of the parents, as well as their political connections with local council. However, these facts are not publicly acknowledged, particularly in the lead up to the February 2016 elections; political expediency dictates that access and free education under UPE must continue to be upheld as one of the NRM's major successes.

(iii) There is no strong pressure on the government to push through quality-focused reforms

The Citizens' Action for Quality Public Education, launched at Kawempe Muslim Primary school in July 2012, was a call for action for quality public education, claiming that: "Our children and nation will have no future, if we choose to do nothing about public education".

When the Citizens' Action forum for quality education took to the streets in 2012, it was out of a sense of frustration that not much was happening with regard to

¹⁴ Interviews, Kampala, January 2015; interviews, Mayuge and Mukono, May 2015.

improving the quality of primary education and children's learning.¹⁵ The parliament's education committee was not seen as very active. Indeed, it was seen as spending time on trips abroad to learn about other countries' schooling. However, despite its efforts to strengthen the government's focus on education quality improvement initiatives, the forum itself lacked organisational strength and heavily relied on a few strong individuals. One interviewee from a parliamentary watch NGO stated that "education has not preoccupied MPs a lot these past few years".¹⁶

The teachers' union in Uganda (UNATU) has attempted to lead the push for higher quality education, but has largely failed to push through initiatives that would be significant. According to a number of interviewees within the union and within school bodies, the union's struggle for salary increases was cleverly manipulated by the NRM government. This was done in a number of ways. On 10 July 2013, the Ministry of Education and Sports moved very quickly to issue a press statement threatening to sack teachers involved in the quality education campaign, and scheduled activities and called upon the security agencies to investigate the NGOs behind the campaign. The teachers' union issued a counter press statement to the one issued by the Ministry of Education that the union was not part of the campaign, even going as far as presenting a petition to the Rt. Hon. Deputy Speaker of Parliament that was tabled in parliament by Hon. Rosemary Sseninde (woman MP – Wakiso district), amidst wide media coverage.¹⁷ Aside from intimidation, the government promised to pay rises in lump payments into a savings and credit organisation belonging to the union rather than through general increases in salary payments.¹⁸ It was alleged that another form of manipulation involved the co-opting of some union, which disrupted the union's agenda and undermined the organisation's unity of purpose.¹⁹

In all, we find a general agreement among educators, policy makers and development partners about the lack of quality in primary education, evidenced by the lack of progress on numeracy and literacy indicators, persistent absenteeism among pupils, teachers and school managers. Government reform efforts to improve the quality have been piecemeal, which is due to the combined features of decentralised rent management, broad (perceived) electoral appeal of fee-free primary education, and weak pressure to improve quality education.

¹⁵ Interview, MP and member of the Citizens' Forum for Quality Education, 21 May 2015.

¹⁶ Interview, NGO, January, 2015.

¹⁷ Fórum for Educación NGOs in Uganda (FENU) News, 4 February 2013. <https://fenuexample.wordpress.com/2013/02/04/action-for-quality-public-education/>

¹⁸ Interviews, Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU), (January 2015); MP and member of the Citizens Forum for Quality Education, May 21, 2015.

¹⁹ Interviews, teachers and union members, January 2015.

4. Local political economy and variations in the quality of education

The success in expanding access to government primary education combined with the inability to improve quality has, as indicated, implied that Ugandans who have the ability to pay for private education have done so. It has also implied that the quality of the teaching taking place in UPE schools is highly variable. The purposes of visiting two districts were primarily two: to get an impression of how UPE policies such as fee-free access to schools were perceived and implemented on the ground; and to get an impression of the political-economy factors influencing UPE-schools' performance.

In the following section, we first outline our research methods at the local level, and subsequently we highlight some findings about how local governments and schools struggled to achieve quality primary education, basically through circumventing the fee-free rule. We then address how school performance differed.

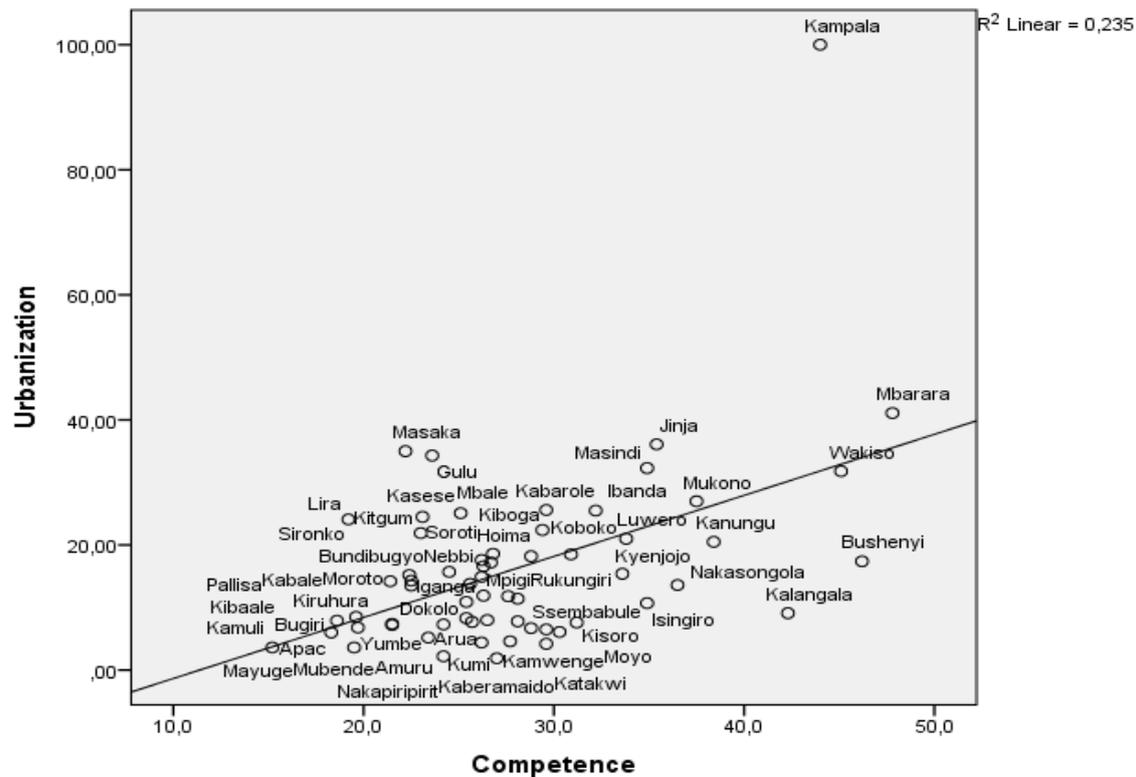
4.1 What we did

There are currently approximately 18,079 primary schools in 121 districts in Uganda. For our purposes we selected two districts which, although clearly not a representative sample, we believe captured the variations in terms of quality indicators and outcomes in education, namely, pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs), literacy levels and rural/peri-urban differences.

The two districts we chose for our study were Mayuge (rural) and Mukono (peri-urban), which are located respectively in the east and the central regions of Uganda. The choice of district for studying and explaining variations of school performance is thus based on the logic that we need districts that are different in terms of wealth, urbanisation and school performance. Figure 1 below is not used for explanatory purposes, but only to gain an understanding of how local governments are situated with respect to learning outcomes ('competence' on the X-axis) and urbanisation (Y-axis).²⁰ Mayuge is a rural district with a low degree of urbanisation. It scores poorly on UWEZO's index ranking the proportion of Primary 3 to Primary 7 (P3-P7) pupils being able to read Primary 2 (P2) level texts.

²⁰The data on the level of urbanisation originates from the National Population and Housing Census 2014. As the report does not present a percentage measure of urbanisation, it has been calculated from the absolute number of people living within the district and the number of people living in an 'urban residence' (for the definition, see the report, page 10ff). Hence, the range is from 0-100.

Figure 1: Local governments' learning outcomes according to level of urbanisation



It is commonly accepted that urban schools generally perform better than rural schools. Mukono and Mayuge are also useful because they are typical cases, in the sense that they have the educational outcome expected from the level of urbanisation. As indicated in Figure 1, Mayuge is among the least urbanised districts in Uganda (proportion of people in the district living in an urban area) and has the lowest score on UWEZO's ranking of pupils' ability to read (in Figure 1, this is referred to as 'competence', along the X-axis). Mukono, on the other hand, is more urbanised and also scores better on UWEZO's ranking. They are good choices because they score very differently in terms of learning outcomes. The national and Kampala pupil-teacher ratios figures for government-aided primary schools are 57 and 42, respectively. However, while these ratios are reasonably low, they do not accurately capture those schools in rural areas where ratios are over 100 pupils per teacher. In Mayuge for example, which has 142 UPE schools, the teacher-pupil ratio is officially put at 1:61. However, in real terms the teacher-pupil ratio is closer to 1:80.²¹ In terms of performance, Mayuge has consistently performed poorly on the primary leaving exams (PLEs) and in 2014 had the highest number of withheld results; 266 candidates overall.²² Furthermore, the average weekly absenteeism rate among pupils in the district was 13.4 percent (13.4 percent male and 13.3 percent female) and the rate among teachers was 20.7 percent (20.3 percent male and 21.3 percent female teachers). Of all the parents interviewed in the district, 83 percent

²¹ Interview Mayuge, February 2015; June 2016.

²² NTV news 2015.

said that they never visited children at school during the last year to discuss their learning (UWEZO, 2010).²³ In Mukono district, which performs relatively better than Mayuge, the average weekly absenteeism rate among pupils of both genders was 7 percent, and the rate among teachers of both genders was 8 percent. Of all the parents interviewed in the district, 74 percent said that they had never visited children at school during the last year to discuss their learning (UWEZO, 2010).

So, the districts differ, but in both districts we would expect the local political economy to influence variations of school performance. If we find the local networks to be of importance for explaining school performance in both districts, our findings appear stronger than if we only found them in, for example, the weaker performing district. By studying the local political-economic set-up, we will be able to uncover the political economy factors accounting for variations in school performance within each district. For facts about the two districts, see Appendix C.

At the district level, we conducted key informant interviews with the political and technical arms of district administrations in Mayuge (16 interviews) and Mukono (17 interviews), including chief administration officers (CAOs), resident district commissioner (RDC), district education officer (DEO), district inspector of schools (DIS), and NGOs. Interviews at these two levels were used to determine the relationship between actors at the national and district level and also used to get an impression of the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the government's education policies in local settings.

The DEOs in the two study districts provided us with information on PLE performance information, on the basis of which we selected two schools in each district; a well performing school and one that was not performing well. The socio-economic characteristics of the communities in which the schools were located did not differ much in either of the districts. At the school level, we conducted interviews and focus group discussions with a cross-section of people. Key informants included head teachers, parents, members of the SMCs and PTAs, pupils and representatives of the schools' foundation bodies. Our questions focused on the school profile (sources of income, teacher/pupil ratios, and school expenditures) and individual and collective perceptions (ideas/interpretations) about the current state of education quality in the country and in their school in particular. The aim of the interview and focus group discussion questions was to get a subjective view of the challenges related to improving the quality of education, possible solutions as well as how government efforts to improve quality were viewed.

It was important to discover what parents, teachers and school administrators thought and felt about quality, equality and access to primary education. The focus groups' discussions and interviews at the school level were also used to map key

²³ The percentage of teachers who are absent in government school is 34 percent. In private schools, teacher absenteeism is 16 percent. As a result, it is estimated that teachers only teach 11 lessons a week, whereas the number should be at least 30 (Ngware et al., 2016)

relationships in the district to situate the school in the local political economic set-up. The aim was to get a picture of what factors contribute to schools' capacity to provide better quality education. In total we met and interviewed 30 people in each district.

In addition to the interviews and focus group discussions at the school level, we spent time in the schools studied to observe first-hand different aspects of the school. This included the number and condition of classrooms available, infrastructure development (the availability of water and toilets), the headteacher's office, book cupboards and books in use, and teachers' living conditions (availability of teachers' quarters) and working conditions (meals and other incentives) as key to teacher effectiveness and education quality. These observations of two poorly performing schools and two better performing schools were important for a comparative analysis. The overall aim of using multiple sources of data, as well as extensive interviewing, field visits and observation in schools, was to have a more authoritative basis for explaining the interplay of localised forms of politics as well as triangulating the information received from the different sources.

4.2 General findings of implementing UPE policies on the ground

In Mayuge and Mukono, key informants at the district level were asked about quality challenges and to propose solutions. The consensus among different district actors was that to achieve better learning outcomes, parents had to contribute to their children's schooling. Parent participation, the introduction of refresher courses for teachers, and strengthening of schools' inspectorates were among the recommendations, in addition to the introduction of patriotism training for teachers.²⁴ Consequently, in both districts, the local councils were passing by-laws (ordinances) to allow schools to compel parents to contribute in certain ways, e.g. in Mayuge with a school term's worth of food (maize) to schools. This move, as well as a financial contribution for grinding the maize, was endorsed by the resident district commissioner (RDC), whose role is to oversee the implementation of government policy.²⁵ The RDC contradictory actions suggest that the NRM government silently supports this policy, which introduces an element of cost-sharing, even if this is against official government policy.

The remarks of the LCV's²⁶ chairman support this observation. He noted that:

“when we go for our annual meetings or regular meetings with the parents and teachers, we try to set a boundary between the policy and human concern. We say: ‘look here the policy is saying (one thing) but we have to survive. Do you think it is right to leave government to provide everything (for your children)? Can't you even contribute a little money so that they (teachers) can get maybe tests for your children, for them to improve and be better able to compete with

²⁴ Interviews, January and May 2015; June 2016.

²⁵ Interview with RDC Mayuge, May 2015.

²⁶ The LCV (Local Council 5) is the district council.

students of Kampala?’ I’m happy some parents understand this, and they have been able to contribute.”

The chairman added, “Some of us have interacted with the president informally, talking about this and raising these issues, but you know sometimes for better or for worse politics comes on board.”²⁷ The chairman LCV’s comments suggest that the president is aware of the problem and by not coming out publicly to renounce the policy that it is indirectly endorsed at the national level.

When interviewees refer to politics, they refer to elections and to the fact that the president is not interested in losing votes, especially in the rural areas. They refer to the fact that the Ugandan government may be in a situation where it has used the word ‘free’ about primary education from the beginning around the 1996 elections, and that the word ‘free’ has been interpreted to mean that everything is free. The interviewees were all of the view that the government now cannot correct this, even if it was never the intention that the parents should not contribute anything, for fear of losing popularity. The message that education is free is then interpreted by local politicians, particularly at the LCIII level, to mean ‘everything is free’, and this is the message the local politicians then convey to the parents. The local NRM leaders are very important during election time, because they can mobilise votes for the rural party. In the words of the LCV:

“The political interference in education comes in from our local leaders. Most of these local leaders think that education is free. Because, as I said before, there is a misinterpretation of government policy and at the lower level there is political interference. I’m saying, you mobilise parents to bring food for their children to eat at school but then when politicians – councillors, chairman and LC3 – come, they tell parents ‘don’t waste your time, the government has provided everything’.”

The Education Secretary, Mukono was of the view that: “I don’t need you to tell me to feed my child. Why did this come about? In my view, I think, when they (the government) said it is free education, there was a bad interpretation of the facts.”²⁸

Parents in a focus group discussion at St. Kizito school were of the view that: “Even if one was to accept that the president said free education, he is not the parent of these children. The children belong to us and if one doesn’t give their child something to eat and they collapse, the president remains the president”. So although many of the respondents were NRM supports (some were wearing NRM T-shirts), they nonetheless openly supported cost-sharing practices that were against official NRM government policy. According to a disgruntled but highly engaged parent:

²⁷ Interviewed May 2015.

²⁸ Interview, the diocesan education secretary; Mukono, June 2015.

“...we (parents/teachers) agree on something in the meeting, but because politicians need the votes, they go to the parents and tell them the contrary to what we agreed upon. They confuse the parents because they need votes in the next election.” ... parents need to be helped to appreciate that children are not Museveni’s – the children will fail, but Museveni will remain the president of Uganda.”²⁹

The tacit condoning of the practice of letting parents contribute has the implication that the performance of government UPE schools varies greatly and is very much up to local contextual factors.

4.3. Explaining variations in school performance

Table 4 below displays the key characteristics of the schools we visited, and below we will address each of these characteristics.

In Mayuge district, we visited two government (UPE) schools, one well performing (school A) and one poorly performing (school B). School A had 33 pupils passing in division 1 and none failed in 2014, whereas School B had no pupils in division 1 and 18 failed out of the 64 pupils sitting the PLE exam in 2014. But, in addition to these numbers, there were many visible differences between the two schools in terms of infrastructure development and innovations. Whereas School A had a *matooke*³⁰ plantation and a chicken project, school B had incomplete structures, and very few students.³¹

School A had many buildings and immediately appeared very organised. At the time of our visit, the Uganda National Teachers’ Union (UNATU) had just announced a general strike over an unfulfilled government promise to increase teachers’ salaries. The strike was not fully endorsed by all teachers, as we found out during our visit to School A, where teaching was going on and a couple of new parents came to register their children. They had left a private school because they had heard School A was better. The school, which had several teachers’ houses, also had large and dry storage rooms where maize, beans and other dry foods were kept.

²⁹ Parents FGD Mukono 2015.

³⁰ *Matooke* is the staple food and having a plantation makes the school self-sufficient.

³¹ Mayuge has a 50 percent primary school dropout rate. In School B, however, the problem relates to the mismatch between the interest of parents and the headteacher. As a result, many parents who regard the school as academically inferior prefer to take their children elsewhere, irrespective of the distance (interviews, district education official and district politician, June 2016)

Table 4: Characteristics of schools visited in Mayuge and Mukono³²

	School A Mayuge	School B Mayuge	School A Mukono	School B Mukono
Performance (PLE results)*	No 9 rank in district	Among 10 last ranked in district	No. 1 rank in district	Ranked low – 111 in district
Performance (teacher statements and inspectors reports)	Teachers express strong visions for quality education and high job satisfaction Parents' involvement	High teacher absenteeism in DEI report Parents not involved	Low teacher absenteeism Well motivated teachers Visions for quality education High satisfaction with the progress in performance – parents are engaged in school	Performance is poor overall Parents not engaged with school Teachers not fully qualified and do not have high job satisfaction The best students lured away by private school
Performance (researcher observations)	Very neat and organised, teachers' quarters, organised lunch	Rudimentary buildings, unfinished structures, rats, ad hoc lunches	Well organised; good teachers quarters, latrines and water source; well-functioning food provision	Poor performance. School lacks the basics – books, dictionaries, teaching and reference materials
Headteacher characteristics	Very active; present at school; very engaged (lobbying)	Passive, sporadic attempts to improve conditions	The headteacher has clear expectations of teachers He is present all the time	Previous headteacher was constantly absent No relationship with parents/SMC, relying on personal relationship with

³² See also appendix B

	for good teachers)		and looks at best practices elsewhere that he uses in his school	district to cover
Position in local networks	Good contacts with local council (lobbying for top-up resources, good teachers) Headteacher elected as LC5 member in 2016 Strong foundation body	No personal contacts with local council (headteacher wrote letters) No top-up resources, lack of teachers No foundation body	Close contacts with local council (members of SMC were also members of the local council) Strong and active foundation body	No personal contacts with local council members or other persons of influence No close contact to foundation body

*based on information from the district inspection office. The rankings are presented slightly differently in the different reports, e.g. Mayuge did not list a full ranking, but listed the 10 best and worst.

It was clear to us that School A had managed to 'get the parents on board', so to speak, and that they were taking a number of initiatives involving parents' contributions that are clearly against official government policy. Teachers at School A seemed engaged and motivated, because their conditions were relatively good due to parents' contributions. Of course, contributions in themselves do not convert automatically into improved quality in education, and there is a risk of corruption and leakage of funds. However, at School A, there was transparency in the way parents' contributions were administered. For example, the head teacher, the SMC and the teachers had together worked out a system where the collected payments for extra tutoring were every Friday given to an appointed teacher who is responsible for administering the funds. This form of accountability, we were told, ensures that funds are spent according to a set plan agreed upon by the head teacher, teachers, SMC and parents.

The teachers were also motivated by the fact that the school provided breakfast and lunch for them, as well as accommodation for some of them. There were weekly checks to see if the teachers had carried out the necessary tests. But teachers were adamant that their performance had nothing to do with regular control by the director of studies or the head teacher. In response to our question of whether there were penalties for teachers' non-performance, one teacher answered: "Teachers here know what to do. It's just in our blood; we're self-driven" (May 2015; focus group discussion with teachers).

The teachers at School A were happy about their jobs and were well motivated. In St. Andrew's, the fact that the headmaster is answerable to the PTA and SMC for school performance has, according to the teachers, among other factors, made a significant difference in the quality education in their school. Teachers are also accountable for their performance, which includes being present in class with lesson plans that are jointly prepared with the head teacher and some of the school directors. Appraisal forms are used to give teachers feedback on their lesson plans and performance. They noted that the cooperation of both parents and teachers in contributing to the purchase of needed books/textbooks, as well as paying towards a teacher's allowances of between 30,000/= and 60,000/= shillings to reward teachers who perform well, has made teachers self-driven, with no room for indiscipline. Finally, the school's good performance has created a good relationship between teachers and parents.

The chairman of the school management committee (interviewed in June 2015) talked about the school's success and their ability to mobilise the parents to contribute to the school. According to the chairman, the interpretation of the UPE policy as free education is the problem, because it is unthinkable that parents can abdicate their responsibility to such a degree that they expect the government to feed their children; it has never happened before and there is no reason for it to happen now. In his view, the government needs to acknowledge that the policy is problematic and reverse it and tell parents that 'they (parents) should feed them (their children in schools)'.

By contrast, at School B, there were no teachers and it was our clear impression that this was not only because of the teachers' strike. Based on the school inspector's report, the school was well known for teacher absenteeism. At the time of our visit, only the headteacher was there, but we suspected she only came because she had an appointment with us. Another teacher arrived an hour later and did not seem clear on what she was supposed to do.

The school infrastructure was poor, with only one school building divided into three large classrooms, which were poorly maintained and disorganised. The storage room used to store, among other things, maize for pupils, was in the headteacher's office; it smelt of mould and had rats. With parents contributing bricks, the headteacher had tried to build teachers' houses, but the construction had not progressed beyond the external walls. Parts of the foundation seemed to have been eroded by rain, and grass was growing in the middle. Based on our conversation with the headteacher, there was no clear system for collecting parents' contributions and allocating these resources to various school needs.

One might draw the conclusion that the difference between the schools is due to the headteacher's ability to mobilise local communities. However, even if the headteacher's role is important, we observed that the better performing school was much better situated in terms of links to the local council and district education office than the poorly performing school. So, the headteacher of School A had been able to influence the DEO to post good teachers, for instance. He had also used connections to make the council contribute to constructing teachers' quarters and boarding facilities. These achievements were, however, lacking in the case of School B, where the headteacher was trying to gain access to the local council through letters about what the school needs – letters that went unanswered.

The political connections of School A were not just limited to the headteacher. The treasurer at the school was a member of the SMC and the foundation body, and was also a member of other local committees outside of the school that made him locally well connected.³³ Local government officials confirmed that the school had managed to establish close ties with the district, which has ensured that the headteacher is not frequently changed, inspection is regular, and support for different initiatives is given.³⁴

³³ Interviews, headteacher and the school treasurer, May 2015.

³⁴ Interview, June 2016.

body, and community leaders with the school's success. He noted that the school started with only 50 pupils in primary 1 (P1) when he joined it in 2007. In 2015, the school had over 800 students, most of whom had moved from other neighbouring schools, and parents previously reluctant to send their children especially girls (for religious reasons), were opting to go along with what is effectively cost sharing and move their children to the school.

During the focus group discussions with teachers in school A in Mukono, all the teachers put their performance down to a combined effort by parents, teachers, the district and the community. According to one teacher: "you find that when you do something good, different people come in to assist. So by our children performing very well, it [the school] has attracted the parents".³⁶

The importance of political connections was also evident in Mukono, where the well-performing school was considerably better connected politically than the low-performing school. For example, the school had several members of Mukono local council on its SMC.³⁷ As the chair of the SMC in the well performing school in Mukono noted:

"we have got some politicians on board, we brought them also on this committee of ours. We have Mrs Ssozi, the LCV women district councillor, we also have the LCIII, he's also on board with us."³⁸

Q: You mean on the SMC?

A: Yes. Then the chairman of this area is also with us. So when we talk, it is a combined voice."

As in Mayuge, the better performing school also appeared to have good relations with the foundation body, i.e. the Church. Hence a group of closely connected persons such as the LCV, LC III, the church members, the head teacher, and SMC members made sure that the school's efforts were supported by the local government, and the school was housing the local Catholic diocese.

As in Mayuge, School B's performance in Mukono was poor based on its PLE results and in terms of teachers' perceptions and our own observations, as indicated in Table 4. Basic teaching materials were lacking, teacher's quarters were there but inadequate, the headteacher did not use the house provided for him, preferring to commute daily from his home 15 kilometres away, and teachers lacked the necessary qualification and motivation. The previous headteacher (the one at the time of our research had only been in the post for less than two years) had often been absent and had made no effort to engage with teachers and parents in the

³⁶ FGD Mukono, May 2015.

³⁷ Interviews, Mukono, 2015.

³⁸ Interview, June 2015.

school. While the headteacher apparently had personal contact in the district education office, she only used these contacts to help cover up her absenteeism, not to pressurise the local council for resources or to enlist their help in mobilising parents and resources for the school.³⁹

Hence, there was no contact with the local council in order to pressurise for resources, and also there was poor and very little interaction with parents. The poor quality and performance of School B in the same district were attributed by many interview respondents to the headteacher's inability to garner the support of different stakeholders on what is needed for a quality education. Her regular absence from school has alienated parents and district officials, who have decided to engage a dynamic deputy with whom they can work to sensitise parents to – and build consensus around – roles and responsibilities. However, we find that even if the personal characteristics of the headteacher are indeed very important, their recruitment for the good performing schools could well be a result of the SMC's connection to the local council and the strong relation to the foundation body.

Mayuge and Mukono, are a low and a high performing district, respectively, but both are typical districts in terms of what one would predict from their degree of urbanisation. In both districts, the performance of government primary schools varied greatly. We found that in both districts, the weaker schools were not well positioned in the local elite networks and did not have great success in promoting their schools. Hence, a strong SMC and a strong foundation body, with close connections to the local council, are instrumental in recruiting a competent and visionary headteacher who would be able to mobilise parents to contribute to the school in various ways. The emergence of such a local coalition around the school appeared not only to be the result of the personal characteristics of the headteacher, but also an outcome of a combination of factors, among which the place in the local political economy networks was important. Interviews and consultations at the national and district levels, and within schools, reveal the importance of political consensus around education and cost-sharing. In the instances where this political consensus is arrived at and works to improve the quality of education – through ordinances, the mobilisation of parents and local leaders (religious and community) – there is evidence that performance in schools is greatly improved.

5. Conclusion

Two decades after the introduction of UPE, amidst great expectations that it would broaden access and deliver a more inclusive education for all Ugandans, its quality deficits have eroded the excitement that accompanied its introduction. Furthermore, the close collaboration and significant donor support for the UPE has declined. This raises the question as to why the egalitarian, inclusive and quality dividends envisaged by President Museveni and the NRM government have not materialised.

³⁹ Interviews, June 2015, June, 2016.

We have argued that there are weak political drivers to improve the quality of education. It would take very large budget allocations to launch general programmes to, for example, improve teachers' salaries or strengthen inspection and monitoring systems. In a *clientelist* political settlement, a system of decentralised rent management renders quality improvements arbitrary; they depend on whether there is a particular donor project or, at the local level, whether there are resourceful and politically well-connected schools and individuals.

In addition, UPE serves to increase the electoral appeal of the NRM to the rural voters. While it has become increasingly clear that UPE is not entirely free, contrary to the general misperception, local leaders, including sub-country chairmen who are predominantly NRM members and are important in terms of political mobilisation, continue to promote it as a free service. The government is aware that cost-sharing by parents in schools is already practised to meet the hidden costs of education under UPE. The government is also aware that the schools that perform well rely on the support and input from the parents, as well their political connections with local council governments. However, these facts are not publicly acknowledged, particularly in the lead-up to the February 2016 elections, which dictate that access and free education under UPE must continue to be upheld as one of the NRM's major successes. Finally, the pressure to push through education quality-enhancing reforms, be it from civil society in general, powerful interest groups or parliament, is not strong enough to overshadow the incentives not to implement quality education initiatives.

At the local level, the school administrations in the high performing schools were able to draw upon resourceful networks in order to mobilise local council funds, as well as funds raised from parents' contributions, in order to improve on different aspects of schools that together extended to improved school performance as a measure of quality.

The high level of political consensus in those schools where performance is better raises the question as to what happens in the cases where this level of political consensus over an important issue – namely, the quality of education – is not achieved. Another question raised by the level of politicisation of quality and school performance under UPE is: how can this be translated into a broader idea of 'political will'? Yet another question raised by the new levels of political consensus is how the inevitable differences that emerge affect the uniformity of educational provision in the country, and the idea of UPE as an economic equaliser and social leveller.

As the government continues to expand the system through the introduction of universal secondary education and vocational training programmes, it is clear that without addressing quality as matter of urgency at all levels of the education system (national, local and sub-national) and as a political imperative that requires pedagogical and political solutions, quality of education is likely to remain in the government's 'to do' folder.

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Appendix A: Governance arrangements in the education sector as of 2016

Figure 1: Flow Chart: roles and responsibilities in the education sector

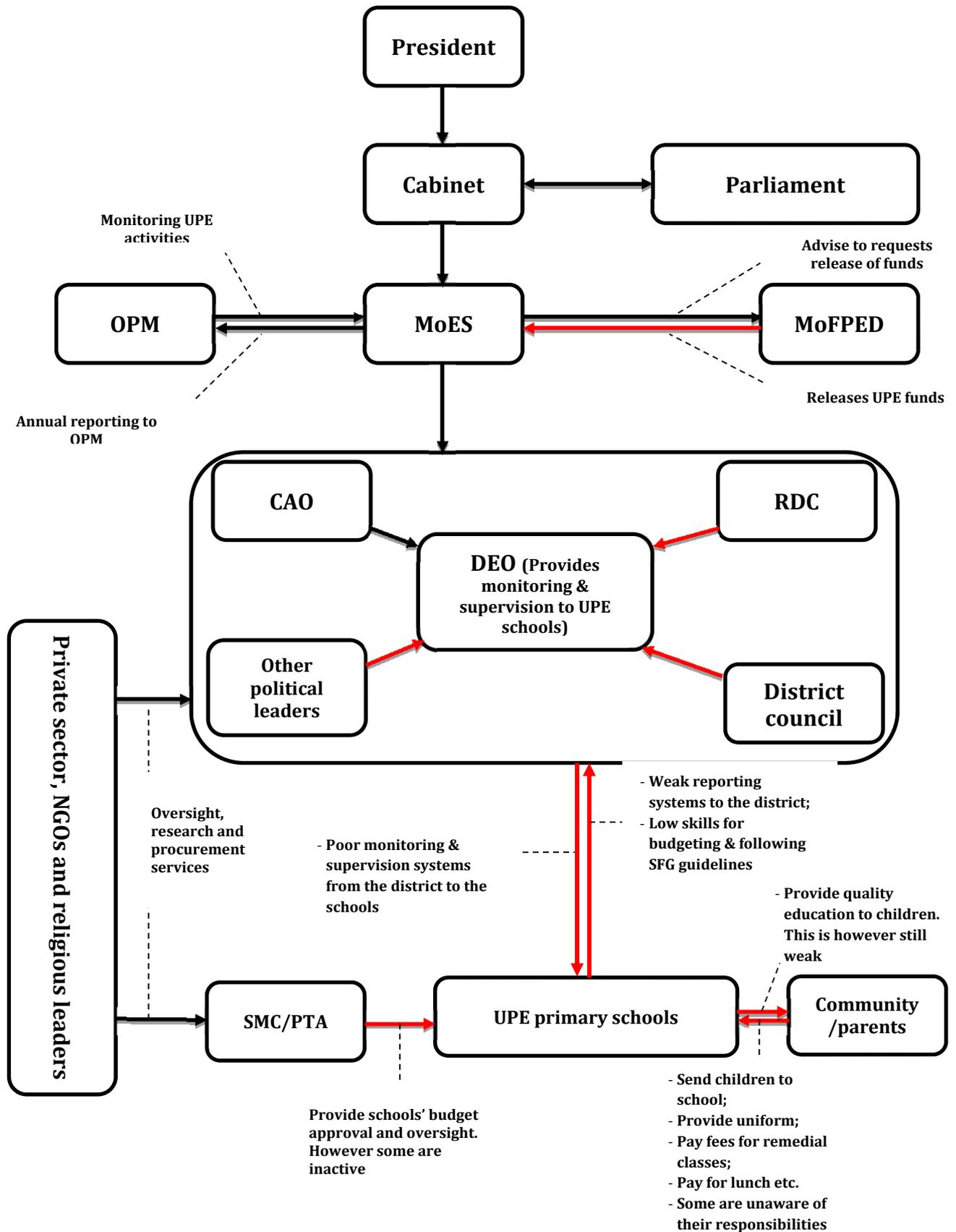
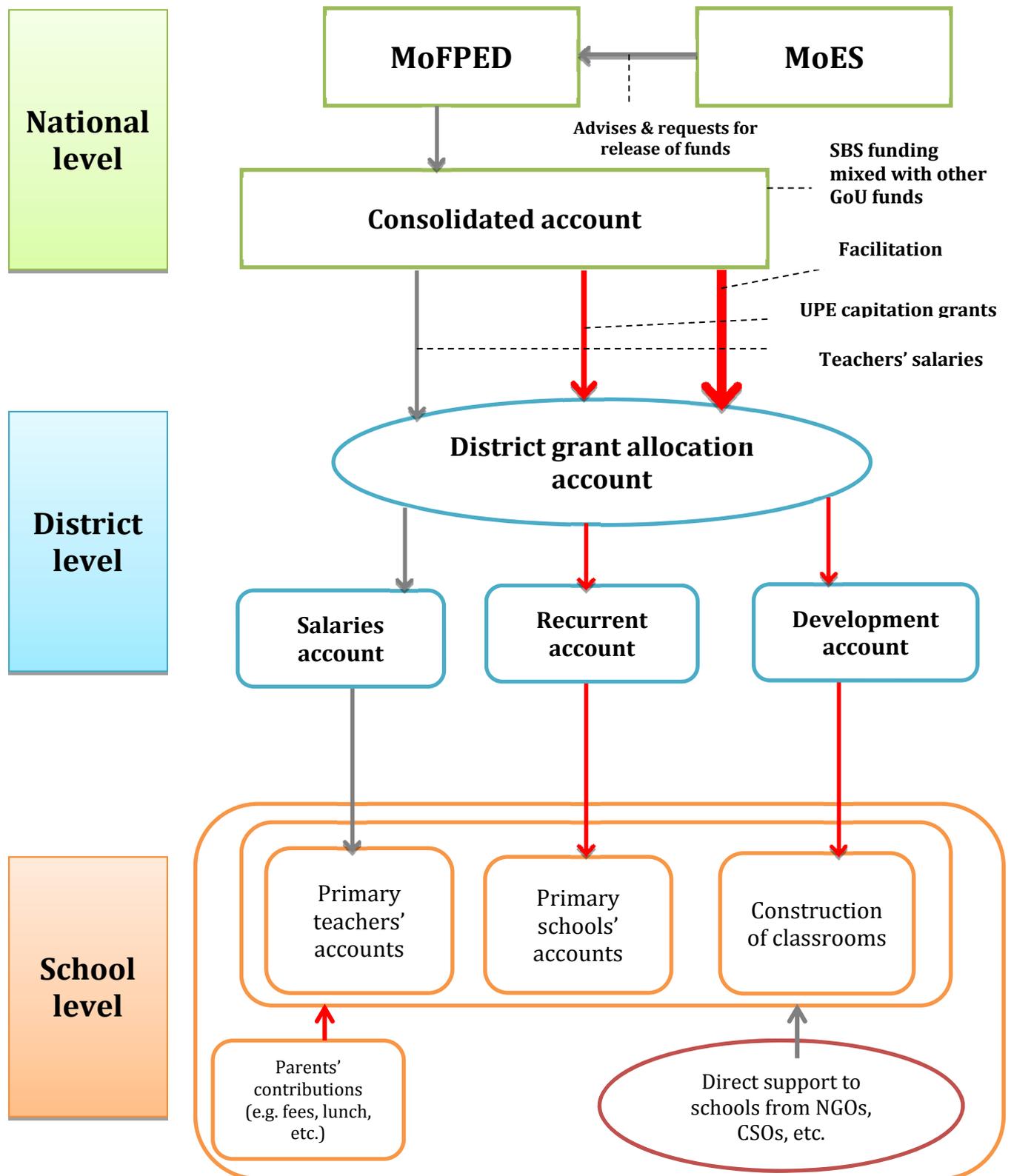


Figure 1 illustrates the roles and responsibilities in the decision-making and implementation of education sector policies. It also shows the formal monitoring mechanisms in place. Policy direction comes from the Ministry of Education and in Uganda's decentralised setting is being implemented by the local governments as regards primary education.

Figure 2 illustrates the flow of funds. Teachers' salaries used to be paid locally, but the existence of widespread problems with financial leakages and 'ghost' teachers made the government change the system (Reinikka and Svensson, 2004). Teachers' salaries are now paid directly; from the MoES to teachers' bank accounts. According to the teachers interviewed, this has made the payment of salaries much more predictable.

Figure 2: Flow of funds in the Ministry of Education and Sports (UPE)



Appendix B: Findings from school-level observation

Mukono district

Primary school A – Condition of school and infrastructure

- Permanent classrooms available and well kept; classroom block and dormitory under construction;
- Teachers' staffroom available;
- Latrines available and quite well kept;
- Water source at school, donated by Compassion;
- Headteacher's office available and well kept and has 'talking walls', display of awards and trophies;
- School accommodates Compassion International offices within the school compound;
- 'Talking compound' with trees, well kept;
- Classrooms clean but quite crowded – pupils squeezed on benches.

Primary school B – Condition of school and infrastructure

- Permanent classrooms available, and some classrooms not in use;
- Latrine available, though not clean;
- Staffroom available;
- Staff houses (2) available, not completed but in use;
- No water source at the school;
- Headteacher's office available, although not well kept, it also doubles as a store for maize flour and other school utensils;
- No 'talking compound'.

Mayuge district

Primary school A (Mayuge) – Condition of school and infrastructure

- Permanent classrooms available, some recently constructed, others quite old and not in use;
- Staffroom available and well kept;
- Some classrooms are being used as food stores and dormitories for pupils;
- Staff houses available, recently constructed;
- The school has a heifer project, and a farm;
- The school land is fenced off;
- The school has a talking compound;
- The headteacher's office is well kept, with talking walls;
- There is a nearby water source;
- Compound and playground well kept.

Primary school B (Mayuge) – Condition of school and Infrastructure

- Permanent classroom available and provided through school facilities grant;
- Temporary shade used as kitchen;
- Incomplete structure for teachers' houses;
- Latrines available, but not well kept;
- Headteacher's office available, but not well kept – foul smelling, with dirty floor and situated near a room that doubles as a food/books/equipment store;
- No talking compound was seen;
- About 12 pupils were found at school;
- No teacher other than the headteacher was found at school at the time of our visit;
- No water source was seen near the school.

Mayuge

Mayuge district, created in 2000, was originally part of Iganga district. It is located in eastern Uganda, bordering Bugiri to the east, Mukono and Jinja in the west, Iganga in the north and Tanzania in the south. It has three constituencies: Bunya East, Bunya South and Bunya West. It has 12 sub-counties, one town council, 68 parishes and 385 villages.

The district has a total area of 4672.22 sq km, of which 76.62 percent is water and 23.38 percent land. It has a population of over 326,567, 167,087 of whom are female and 159,480 are male. By 2013, the district had 142 UPE schools with a total current enrolment of 94,845 pupils. With 1,407 teachers on the payroll, the teacher-to-pupil ratio was 1:61. The district has 21 universal secondary schools (USE) with an enrolment of 4,768 students, 1,460 classrooms and 141 teachers on government payroll. The sub-counties that do not yet have government-aided USE schools include: Kigandalo, Busakira, Jagusi, Kityerera, Bukatube, Imanyiro, Wairasa and Mpungwe.

Mukono

Mukono district is bordered by Kayunga district to the north, Buikwe district to the east, the Republic of Tanzania to the south, Kalangala district to the southwest, Wakiso district and Kira Town to the west and Luweero district to the northwest. Mukono, the main municipal, administrative and commercial centre of the district, is located approximately 27 kilometres (17 miles) by road, east of Kampala, the capital of Uganda and the largest city in that country.

Mukono district originally comprised the counties of Kyaggwe, Bugerere and Buvuma. In December 2000, Bugerere was constituted into Kayunga district. In July 2010, Buvuma was granted district status, becoming Buvuma district. The remaining

mainland Kyaggwe was also partitioned with the eastern portion, becoming Buikwe district.

Mukono district is made up of two counties: Nakifuma county and Mukono county. The district has seven urban areas, namely: (a) Mukono municipal council; (b) Nakifuma town council; (c) Kalagi town council; (d) Naggalama town council; (e) Katosi town council; (f) Kasawo town council; and (g) Namataba town council. The district headquarters are located in Mukono, 27 kilometres (17 mi) east of Kampala on the Kampala-Jinja highway.

The 1991 national population census estimated the population of Mukono district at about 319,400. According to the 2002 national census figures, Mukono district had a population of about 423,100, of whom 49.8 percent were males and 50.2 percent were females. Then, its population growth rate was projected at 2.7 percent per annum. In 2012, the population of the district was estimated at about 551,000 people.

Mukono and Mayuge districts: location and education indicators

Indicator	Mukono	Mayuge
Location	Central	East
Population ⁴⁰	599,817	479,172
Literacy rates for the district ⁴¹	80	64
Number of primary schools in the district	324	218
Urban/rural	Peri-urban	Rural
Number of students	126,495 61,095 male; 65,400 female	122,861 61,012 male; 60,849 female
Number of teachers	3,262 1,427 male; 1,835 female 39 pupils per teacher	2420 1,004 male; 1,416 female 51 pupils per teacher
PLE performance index	62% 65 male; 59 female	46% 49 male; 43 female

Source: Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) 2014.

⁴⁰National Population and Housing Census, 2014.

⁴¹UBOS 2014. UNHS 2012/13

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