Governance and Public Service Delivery in Uganda: A Case of Universal Primary and Secondary Programs in Uganda: Institutional Arrangements and School Performance

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Abstract

Although Uganda has made significant progress in terms of improving access to education, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the country is still struggling with equity and quality issues. The country, through the Ministry of Education and Sports has undertaken several educational reforms in relation to educational governance as important ingredients for successful educational policy reforms. This study sought to analyze the effect of educational governance on the quality of education in Uganda and the objectives were hinged on four factors: decentralization, accountability, provision and financing, and incentives. A sample size of 370 respondents with which the use of a mixed-methods approach (using statistical techniques and semi-structured interviews with different key players in the education field) adopted to illuminate some very interesting mechanisms through which governance could influence on quality. The main findings are that, contrary to some assertions made by policymakers, institutional arrangements matter but a) they are not the main explanatory variable and b) when they matter, they do so in a multi-directional way. The study shows that the association between governance variables and performance accounts for a very small portion of the differences in performance in schools in Uganda. It is estimated that greater autonomy in the allocation of resources significantly accounts for the differences in mean performance. The study shows that the relationship between governance and performance is mediated through school progression. Thus, school progression in the schools largely explains the differences in the quality of education in the country.

Keywords: *Governance, education, accountability, decentralization, incentives, financing, Uganda*

Background to the Study

Education governance is concerned with how the funding, provision, ownership and regulation of education and how training systems are coordinated, and at what level; local, regional, national and supranational (NESSE, 2012). Whilst for many countries across the world it continues to be governments who play the most significant role in coordinating education, the distribution of these responsibilities has been changing in response to calls for greater efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and democracy (*ibid*). Households, communities, and new kinds of private actors, are increasingly involved in many different aspects of education and training governance, raising questions about equity, participation and transparency.

In Uganda, Section XVIII of the 1995 Constitution provides that (i) The State shall promote free and compulsory basic education. (ii) The State shall take appropriate measures to afford every citizen equal opportunity to attain the highest educational standard possible. (iii) Individuals, religious bodies and other non-governmental organizations shall be free to found and operate educational institutions if they comply with the general educational policy of the country and maintain national standards (Gov of Uganda, 1995). Furthermore, article 30 makes education for children a human right, and according to article 34 children are entitled to basic education by the state and parents (*ibid*). Education and training in Uganda is also governed by the Education Act (2008) and other related Acts of Parliament.

The current education policy focuses on expanding the functional capacity of educational structures and reducing on the inequalities of access to education between sexes, geographical areas, and social classes in Uganda. It advocates for the redistribution of resources viz a viz reforming the educational sector. More resources have been allocated to lower educational public sector through the UPE and USE programmes in order to enhance equity of access at those

levels between boys and girls (MoES, 1998). All this is aimed at ensuring effective public service delivery in Uganda.

However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the country is still struggling with equity and quality issues. For instance many girls become coerced into sex or can be obliged to trade sex for economic survival. It is common for girls to become sexually active at a much younger age than men, causing the rise of HIV/AIDS to become even more pronounced among the girls in upper primary and lower secondary. Older men are breaking long-established social customs and choosing younger girls to become their sexual partners in order to avoid catching HIV. In some districts, HIV prevalence among 13–19 year

old girls is at least 10 times higher than in males of the same age (TASO, 2013). It has also been reported that UPE has negatively impacted on quality and equity dimensions of education - the foremost of all being the condemnation of children of the poor to poor public or UPE education compared to children of the rich who access good private education (Opolot, 2004). The availability and state of learning and teaching aids in UPE and USE schools cannot be compared to those in private schools and the latter have increased in tandem with rising demand for quality education in the country (*ibid*). A key indicator of the poor quality of UPE is the unacceptably high pupil to teacher ratios, which in some cases exceed 150 pupils to one teacher in some classes.

Equitable learning has long been sacrificed as teachers and whole school systems are unable to address the specific learning needs of individual pupils, their varying levels of disability and gender concerns notwithstanding. Consequently, UPE and USE are witnessing the highest drop-out rates in primary and secondary education with girls and children with disabilities taking the lead. Above all, UPE and USE, in spite of the political proclamations that it is part of the poverty alleviation strategy, has not addressed context-specific educational needs of communities, thus, hampering effective service delivery. This leads to questions of its relevance to development. In other words, UPE and USE continue to ignore Uganda's socio-economic and cultural diversities and the attendant variations in basic survival skill needs, thus undermining its

impact on social service delivery in Uganda.

Statement of the Problem

Although Uganda has made significant progress in terms of improving access to education, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the country is still struggling with equity and quality issues. The country, through Ministry of Education and Sports, has undertaken several educational reforms in relation to educational governance as important ingredients for successful educational policy reforms. However, more girls are dropping out of school before completing the education cycle. At the same time, the availability and state of learning and teaching aids in UPE and USE schools cannot be compared to those in other public and private schools thereby widening the equity gap especially between rural and urban schools (Opolot, 2004). The performance in these different schools clearly shows that the quality of learning in the UPE and USE schools is much lower compared to the other public and private schools especially in urban centres. It is true that the governance and the institutional arrangement in UPE and USE schools are considerably different as compared

to the traditional public schools and private schools in the urban centres. However, there is scanty information pertaining to the effect of educational governance on the quality of education in Uganda. This formed the basis of the present study.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to examine the decentralization of education governance in the UPE and USE schools; assess the accountability procedures within the UPE and USE schools; establish the funding procedures within the UPE and USE schools; and find out the distribution of incentives to the teachers in the UPE and USE schools in Uganda.
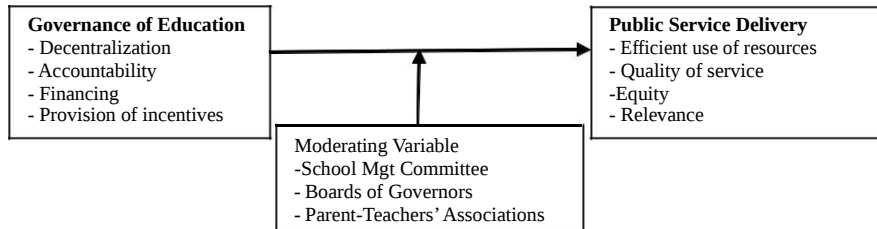
Conceptual Framework

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┌─────────────────────────────┐                    ┌────────────────────────────┐
│ Governance of Education     │                    │ Public Service Delivery    │
│ - Decentralization          │ ─────────────────► │ - Efficient use of resources│
│ - Accountability            │        ▲           │ - Quality of service       │
│ - Financing                 │        │           │ -Equity                    │
│ - Provision of incentives   │        │           │ - Relevance                │
└─────────────────────────────┘        │           └────────────────────────────┘
                          ┌────────────┴──────────────┐
                          │ Moderating Variable        │
                          │ -School Mgt Committee       │
                          │ - Boards of Governors       │
                          │ - Parent-Teachers' Associations│
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Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Research Design

A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims at combining relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. It is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes a blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2006). As far as this study was concerned, the descriptive research design was adopted and used as the blueprint for the collection of primary and secondary data, measurement and analysis of data. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a descriptive design describes issues about an individual, institution or phenomenon. This design was chosen because the study intended to describe the effect of educational governance on the quality of UPE and USE education programmes in Uganda.

Study Population The study population is the collection of all individual units or respondents to whom the results of a survey are to be generalised (Odiya 2009). Such a group of individuals is called the "target population." In this study, the units or individual for a target population included the members of the Boards of Governors, School Management Committees and Parents-Teachers' Associations; Head teachers, Teachers Parents/Guardians, Students and Pupils. All these categories of people have common characteristic in that they are all connected to UPE and USE and are thus involved or affected by whatever decisions made at various times. This is why they have been considered to be part of the target population for this study. From the statistics obtained from MoES *(2014)*, the target population of the study that was selected is 10,000 people. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the composition of this target population.

Sample Size

In determining an optimum sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan sampling frame (1970) was used and is also appended to this report. From the population of study given above and in accordance with the Krejcie and Morgan sampling frame the sample size of the study used was 370 respondents. To ensure representativeness for each category of respondents, simple proportions were used to obtain a sample representing each unit of the population.

Table 1: Summary of Population of Study and Sample Size

Category of Respondents	Population	Sample Size
Board of Governors	500	19
Members of Senate	500	19
Parent-Teachers' Association members	500	19
School Management Committee members	500	19
Headteachers and Teachers	2000	74
Parents and Guardians	4000	146
Students and Pupils	2000	74
Total	**10000**	**370**

Sampling Procedure

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select the members of BOG, PTAs, SMCs and Head teachers as indicated in Table 1. These were selected purposively because purposive sampling is sampling techniques that allows a researcher to use the people that have the required information with respect to the objectives of his/her study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). This is also in agreement with Kothari (2006) who stated that purposive sampling is used when one is sure that those particular people have the much-needed data that the study seeks to find. In primary and secondary schools, members of BoG, PTAs, SMCs and Head teachers are by virtue of their positions and responsibility, custodians of information on school governance, thus; they have information that this study sought to find.

The other method of sampling that was used is the simple random sampling which is a probabilistic method that offers equal chance to every subject in the target population that was selected and avoids biasness on the part of the researcher (Kothari, 2006). Simple random sampling which is also called the lottery method is a sampling method that involves giving numbers to every subject, folding the numbers and placing them into a container and then picking any number at random (Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and writing the name of the subject assigned that number. After the first picking, the ballot was folded and replaced and the process repeated until the intended sample was obtained. This was to ensure equal chances for every ballot picked. If a ballot that has already been picked was picked a second time, it was ignored and replaced. Therefore, simple random sampling was used to select the teachers, the student and pupil leaders. On the other hand, convenient sampling, which involves selecting cases as they become available to the researcher (*ibid*), was used to select the parents/guardians. This is because; the subjects are easily and conveniently available (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

Data Collection Instruments and methods

To collect large quantity of data, several documents were gathered and reviewed; and at the same time interviews were held with groups of respondents according to their categories. Interviews were used to collect data from the members of BoGs, PTAs, SMCs and Teachers. Focus group discussions were also held with students and pupils inorder to triangulate the data from the other respondents.

Reliability and Validity of Instrument

For this study, reliability was done by pre-testing the questionnaires and interview guide, among a few corresponding respondents, other than the ones they were intended for. This approach helped in identifying weaknesses in the instruments and to further improve on them before they were administered. Respondents were requested to suggest any improvements or amendments, to include in the final instruments. This ensured validity and reliability of the instruments hence data collected. Furthermore, validity of the instrument was assessed through consultation and rating the items and then computing the Content Validity Index (CVI) which is a measure of validity of the instrument.

As already stated, to ascertain reliability, the researcher pre-tested the research instrument on a reasonable number of respondents, who were not used in the final data collection process. After pre-testing, the Chronbach's Coefficient Alpha (α) was computed to indicate the level of reliability of the instrument. A simplified α formula used was; $\alpha = Np/[1+p (N-1)]$; Where N equals the number of items and p equals the mean inter-item correlation (0.1).

Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected was cleaned and edited to ensure consistency, completeness and accuracy before it was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) a computer soft ware programme. Using the SPSS, the data was analyzed descriptively using means and correlation analysis to determine the effect of governance on the service delivery in the schools. Where necessary, comparison of results was done by considering the percentages obtained through the use of MS Excel. The analyzed data has been presented in tables and chart forms for making precise interpretation and conclusions.

Key findings from documents and News Papers and interpretation

Analysis of several documents and information in media papers revealed that governance in the schools continues to face challenges as indicated below. Data collected from respondents on the effect of governance on service delivery in the UPE and USE schools around the country is presented in Figure 4.1 below.
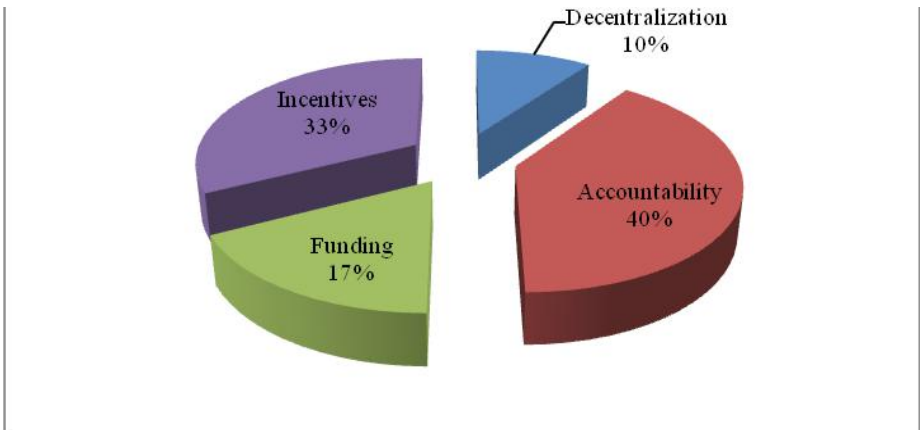
Figure 1: Effect of Governance on Quality of Service delivery in the UPE and USE schools

From Figure 1, it is evident that despite efforts by government to decentralize educational services, provide funding, incentives, accountability continues to present a challenge that is hampering quality service delivery in the schools. At least 40% of the respondents acknowledged that accountability is still a challenge affecting service delivery in the UPE and USE schools. Figure 1 further indicates that provision of incentives to the teachers is still another challenge in as far as quality service delivery is concerned. At least 33% of the respondents indicated that provision of incentives is yet another challenge in the delivery of quality services in the schools.

It can also be observed that 17% of the respondents indicated that funding of various activities in the schools presents another challenge that affects service delivery in the schools. Lastly, at least 10% of the respondents indicated that decentralization is still a problem in the schools and affects service delivery.

Data collected from face to face interviews and focus group discussions provided justification for the above

findings in Figure 1. Below are presentations of data collected on the basis of objectives of the study.

Decentralization of Education Governance in the UPE and USE schools in Uganda

These are opinions presented by various respondents on the issue of decentralization of education governance and the corresponding effect on service delivery in the schools.

One of the respondents said;

"Although government has decentralized governance of education, provision of quality education is still a nightmare to people of Isingiro south. Without support from other organizations, provision of education in the area still faces challenges. Tommy Hilfiger foundation, a private foundation that supports education and improvement has been instrumental in achieving good grades that have been achieved. A donation of two million dollars by the Tommy Hilfiger corporate foundation saved the students/pupils of the challenge of geographical location and topography issues. An issue of pupils/students spending long hours looking for water was solved too. The intervention of the Millennium Village Projects (MVP) improved the grades of pupils/ students in schools. Issues of equity were addressed since both male and female students had access to education."

From the quotation, without support from Tommy Hilfiger, service delivery in the schools would have remained very poor. Such organizations are not found everywhere and so some schools have not received any support and their grades are still very low.

In another interview, another respondent said;

"Government has spent $15M on building 6613 new classrooms and 405 science laboratories, libraries, provide text books and laboratory equipment to 819 schools under the USE programs. Unfortunately, this has not yielded corresponding value in terms of service delivery in the schools."

On the other hand, one respondent noted that,

> "Government is yet set to construct more schools in Kampala district to absorb the increasing enrollments in the UPE and USE programmes. However, there is no guarantee that this will lead to effective service delivery in the schools."

Another respondent added that;

"So far, fifty firms that were contracted to carry out infrastructural work on government schools performed poorly; they exhibited either slow progress, poor workmanship or completely abandoned their work. This has hampered service delivery as the structures cannot be used for teaching and learning."

Accountability procedures within the UPE and USE schools in Uganda Accountability is loosely defined as value for money and this can be manifested in the services provided to the schools. Data collected through face to face interactions with respondents showed that many challenges exist in relation to accountability in the schools. For instance, one of the respondents said;

"For us in Kisoro district, there has been fair accountability. Kisoro district has improved and benefited from school facilities grant from which classrooms, houses were constructed for teachers, furniture and text books for students. This reflects good service delivery."

This is a positive contribution for Kisoro district but elsewhere, accountability has serious challenges. For instance, one of the respondents said;

"Wakiso/Luweero Katikamu SDA school and London College were closed on 22nd July 2011 indefinitely after students staged a strike due to lack of school facilities. Students complained of poor service delivery and, poor infrastructure. This was despite the fact that government had released funds for construction of infrastructure in the schools."

Another respondent from war torn districts in the north said;

"UPE pupils lack sitting facilities; pupils sit on the floor as classes go on. Lack of adequate infrastructure and teaching facilities (classrooms); overcrowding in classes;

lack of transparency, there is no accountability for the UPE funds released by government."

A significant reflection of poor service delivery was noted in some district like Amuria where during examinations, the schools did not receive question papers on time. One respondent said;

"In Amuria district, primary schools lacked examination papers during P.L.E, this shows poor service delivery."

In some district government released funds for World Bank funded projects in support to the schools but there is virtually no value to the funds released. One of the respondents said;"The World Bank released 300bn shillings as donations to cater for USE. This shows a strategic vision that the World Bank has towards educating the citizens of Uganda, prioritizing the need for education in the country. This is seen as an effort by the international organizations in supporting the education sector in Uganda. However, those managing the funds have not accounted for what they received and this has negatively impacted on service delivery."

Ideally, schools are supposed to be inspected and Inspectors of Schools and District Education Officers are supposed to supervise teachers to ensure quality teaching and learning in the schools. However, this is not possible leading to poor teaching and learning in most of the schools. One of the respondents said;

"School inspectors are not doing their work. Many schools in several districts are not inspected in the entire academic year. This therefore leads to lack of accountability by school head teachers."

It was found out that in some schools, teachers are often absent from duty. This is typical of poor accountability. There is no value for the money government pays the teachers as salary. It was noted by one respondent that;

"The minister of education and sports complained that absenteeism among pupils and teachers had risen in Luweero district. This hinders the performance of children in schools."

Furthermore, data collected from Newspapers is in support of the views presented by the various respondents. For instance, New Vision Tuesday July 27, 2010, reported that 300 teachers demand transcripts after completing diploma courses in Primary Education at Christ the King training school in Gulu district. It affected them from getting promotions at their workplaces and also developing their career through upgrading. This is lack of accountability on behalf of the trainers and this makes teachers lose morale to teach because they consider that they have not benefited from the trainings. Furthermore, New Vision Wednesday July 25, 2010, reported that 885,757 pupils who sat UNEB exams could not express in the exams implying that perhaps they did not receive quality education. This is poor accountability of the investment in terms of teaching and funds used in the process.

It was also reported by the Daily Monitor, Monday, 4th October 2010, that Matthew Bukenya (UNEB executive secretary) ranked poor performance of students (UPE and USE) to failure of students to express themselves. Dr. John Kalema (lecturer at MUK) proposed that emphasis be given to English than thelocal languages to help interpret questions. This justifies the fact that there is lack of value for the funds invested in the entire education system. Furthermore, the New Vision Wednesday May 25, 2011 reported high school dropout rate worrying (Kampala). The Director, Population Secretariat revealed that a big number of students who join Primary Education do not reach secondary. This is partly blamed on high education costs (secondary), early marriages, family responsibilities. This is further evidence of poor accountability for government efforts in providing educational services to its people.

Funding Procedures within the UPE and USE schools in Uganda

In Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports is responsible for providing funds, school infrastructure, training and providing policy and guidelines for UPE. The funds are either released to the school accounts directly (for USE schools) or through the local district (for UPE schools). However, these channels have been found to present challenges which ultimately affect governance and service delivery in the schools. For the UPE, the District Councils are responsible for utilization of UPE funds. They mobilize the local resources and work hand in hand with funder mental bodies to promote primary

education. The District Council co-operates with the central government in construction of schools/infrastructure. They maintain physical school facilities and supervise and inspect schools. However, there are still challenges in the administration of the funds.

In a focus group discussion one of the respondents said;

"The challenge is that the funds are always delayed and insufficient. The funds released cannot suffice to serve the purpose for which they are released. For instance, UPE funds released cannot support management of school activities for a term. Ultimately, this affects the service delivered."

In some instances, the funds provided in terms of grants such as World Bank grants have benefited some schools. For instance the New Vision 4th November 2009 reported that over 73 primary schools in Northern Uganda were set to achieve better standards of education and infrastructure after being linked to schools in the UK by Africa revival, this link could enable poor communities in Uganda to benefit from exchange visits for Ugandan teachers to schools in the UK. Similarly, the New Vision 2nd November 2009 reported that NGOs were set to construct 108 classrooms in Teso. These modalities have helped a few schools but not all.

Distribution of incentives to the teachers in the UPE and USE schools in Uganda

Teachers like other workers in organizations need to be sufficiently compensated and motivated by being given some incentives. Unfortunately, the distribution of incentives is either lacking or insufficient. This has led to failure for teachers to effectively do their duties. For instance, in a focus group discussion, one of the teachers said;

"*In some government aided schools teachers dodged classes and schools were paralyzed. Schools included in Mbale Municipality. This was in connection to low salaries payment.*"

In another discussion, another teacher said;

In Koboko, the former Minister of Education Namirembe Bitamizire gave a strong warning to all teachers who do not abide by the ministry's policy of automatic promotions of pupils irrespective of whether they have passed or not. This is because some teachers were not happy with the incentives provided and wanted to transfer their anger to the children by making them repeat classes."

This shows poor service delivery because teachers are not playing their part of equipping students to compete favorably with others. The New Vision Friday 5th May 2011 reported that teachers in hard-to-reach areas in Amudat were still yearning as the teachers in other districts got their allowances for hard-to-reach areas. Amudat district Local Government had not yet got the allowances that financial year. Even new teachers who were appointed and posted in September 2012 were not on pay roll up to then. This portrays poor governance and lack of responsiveness by the Amudat district officials.

Discussion

In recent years, however, the literature on the pursuit of governance for growth has increasingly taken a cautionary tone, highlighting risks, pitfalls and limitations. This shift reflects the myriad of problems

encountered by developing countries in the pursuit of governance for growth. Another possible reason is that the validity of this theory was open to question in the face of generally widespread positive rates of economic growth during the few years immediately preceding the current international financial and economic crises. Interestingly, Rodrik (2008) offers a measured and cautionary conclusion to his recent paper on governance by noting that economists have little to say about 'good governance', but much to contribute to the governance for growth agenda.

Another example of this cautionary approach is Acemoglu's (2008) recent arguments, which generally fall within this same school of thought. Acemoglu (2008) argues that the link between enhanced governance and governance for growth is neither clear-cut nor can it be confidently pursued as a policy. He offers five additional recommendations that are essentially cautionary points (directed in the first instance to World Bank economists): (i) there is no general recipe for improving institutions; (ii) the pitfalls of policy reform should be avoided, and the political economy constraints should be recognized; (iii) policies can create new and potentially dangerous political constituencies;

(iv)   public goods are indispensable; and (v) openness and transparency are important. This appears to be true of the situation in UPE and USE schools in the Uganda education system.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, the interviews and focus group discussions, it is apparent that governance of UPE and USE schools in Uganda has not delivered the required service due to challenges in accountability, incentives, funding and decentralization that have frustrated the system.

Recommendations

The study provides the following as recommendations:

- In order to get value for money, there is need for training of all stakeholders responsible for government spending so as to direct resources to the desired goals.

- Teachers should be provided with appropriate incentives to motivate them to effectively deliver services to the beneficiaries.

- Funds to the schools should be appropriate and released timely to support delivery of educational programmes.

- Decentralization should be effectively done and people should be empowered to carry out the roles mandated to them.

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