



COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF THE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION (UPE) POLICY



THEMATIC REPORT 2: EFFICACY OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN SUPPORTING THE REALIZATION OF UPE



November, 2018



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

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FOREWORD

This independent comprehensive evaluation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy is one of the many evaluations of Government policies and programmes to be produced by the National Planning Authority (NPA) in fulfilment to the National Planning Act (2002) and the National Development Plan (NDPII). Two decades since the UPE policy was introduced, it is important to look back and take stock of the remarkable gains attained, identify the challenges faced, and lessons learnt during the implementation of the UPE policy.

The objectives of the UPE Policy were:

- 1) To provide facilities and resources to enable every child to enter school;
- 2) To ensure the completion of the primary cycle of education;
- 3) To make education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities;
- 4) To ensure that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans; and
- 5) To reduce poverty by equipping every individual with basic skills.

This comprehensive evaluation set out to assess the extent to which the above objectives have been achieved. In an effort to provide guided policy direction, the evaluation was undertaken along six (6) thematic areas that include:

- (i) Policy, Legal, Regulatory and Institutional frameworks;
- (ii) Efficacy of the Primary School Curriculum in Supporting the Realization of UPE;
- (iii) Primary Teacher Training for Producing Competent Teachers to deliver UPE;
- (iv) Efficacy of School inspection in Supporting the delivery of UPE;
- (v) Financing and Costing of UPE; and
- (vi) Education Modelling and Forecasting.

These Reports provide over-arching findings and recommendations necessary for improving the quality of primary education in Uganda. In particular, the reports are useful in: informing the finalization of the review of the Education White Paper; improving teacher training mechanisms and policies; improving adequacy of the curriculum; strengthening policies and guidelines regarding community participation; inspection; providing status for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education for All; and informing policy planning and the Uganda Vision 2040.

The comprehensive evaluation used both quantitative (secondary and primary) and qualitative evidence using data from; the UNHS, EMIS, UNEB, NAPE, MTEF, World Bank, UNESCO, and NPA Survey among others. The quantitative analysis was based on rigorous econometric and non-econometric models that include the: Standard Mincerian Regression; Stochastic Frontier production function; Benefit Incidence analysis, cohort analysis, ordinary least squares analysis, logit analyses, UNESCO's Education Policy and strategy simulation (EPSSim). With respect to

the qualitative analysis, we undertook a rigorous desk review of the relevant literature with bench marked good country policy practices, various formative and summative evaluations on the UPE policy before, interviews and field work.

This comprehensive evaluation was based on the standard OECD-DAC evaluation principles which includes; relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The rating criteria is categorized into 3 decision rules namely; Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, and Not Achieved. Overall the UPE Policy has been **partiallyachieved** based on the OECD criteria rating.

The UPE policy substantially meets the relevance principle. The policy is aligned to national priorities and policies such as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 of achieving Universal Primary education, Education Act 2008, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, NDPs and Uganda Vision 2040. Empirical evidence indicates that: 88 percent of the school going age children are in school; and equity in terms of gender parity and Special Needs Education have greatly improved.

On the other hand, **the UPE policy partially meets the effectiveness principle.** Overall, 60 percent of the UPE objectives have been substantially achieved under objective 1, 3 and 5, but with partial achievement registered on 2 and 4. This rating is as a result of performance on the following indicators; access of 88 percent, PLE completion of 65 percent, remarkable improvement in literacy and numeracy, cohort completion rate of 38 percent, dropout rate of 38.5, repetition rate of 1.5 percent.

This policy partially meets the efficiency principle in producing the maximum possible outcome given the available inputs. This is explained by the government-aided schools being away from the maximum possible outcome by only 0.38 percent when compared to their private schools counterparts at 11.8 percent. This implies that, for Government to improve learning outcomes, it should increase financing to the primary school sector. However, the evaluation notes that there are still leakages in the system among which include; poor completion, absentiseem, less time on task by teachers and low pass rates.

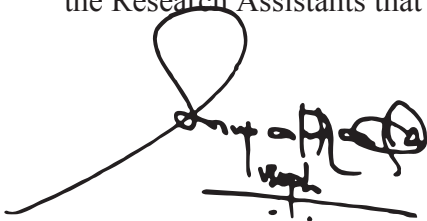
The UPE policy partially meets the policy impact principle. Notably, the policy has significantly impacted on the years of schooling especially on the average years of education for the household head that have increased to 10 years from 4.2 years in 1997. Empirical evidence shows that completing 7 years of primary increases household incomes by about 10.2 percent as compared to their counterparts who don't complete the cycle. Similarly, the analysis showed that an additional year of schooling improves Primary Health Care (PHC) outcomes of these households, as well as equipping individuals with basic skills and knowledge to exploit the environment for self-development and national development.

The UPE policy partially meets the sustainability principle. The comprehensive evaluation notes that while donor financing has gone down over the years, government financing and household education expenditure have increased. Over the same period, the per capita expenditure has consistently reduced occasioned by increase in enrolment out-pacing growth in the education budget, indicating a financial sustainability constraint. Beyond that, a review of the institutions that support UPE indicates that albeit their challenges, they are technically capable of spear heading a successful UPE Programme. Moreover, Government continues to greatly support primary education amidst other education sub-sectors like BTVET and USE which compete for the available fixed resource envelope. Notwithstanding, there are other factors which hinder the sustainability of the policy, that include; high population growth rate, high dropout, negligence by parents and poverty among others.

Overall, empirical evidence indicates that the UPE policy remains relevant, pro-poor and has largely fulfilled its primary objective of increasing equitable access. However, challenges that include leakages within the system affect learning outcomes. Similarly, to attain the desired quality Universal Primary Education, the per pupil expenditure should increase to UGX 63,546 for Urban schools and UGX 59,503 for rural schools from the current UGX 10,000 that government is contributing. In fact, the demand constraints have reduced over the UPE span, with Uganda pursuing an inclusive economic growth and rapid reduction in poverty which has significantly increased the financial resources at the disposal of households. This also illustrates the increasing priority that Ugandans have accorded to these areas and the impact of the UPE policy in raising awareness and addressing cultural constraints even among the poorest households.

Indeed, Government was right on its decision to implement the policy and is therefore advised to continue pursuing this programme with improved financing and institution strengthening as indicated in the respective thematic reports.

In conclusion, I extend my gratitude to the; First Lady/Minister of Education and Sports for the overwhelming support, Parliament of Uganda and the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development for appropriating funds for the first comprehensive evaluation. Also, we acknowledge the support from; the Inter-Agency Committee, Ministry of Education and Sports, Local Governments, Schools visited, the NPA Fraternity especially the M&E Department and the Research Assistants that collected the data that informed part of the analysis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Muvawala', is written over a horizontal line.

Joseph Muvawala (PhD)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABEK	Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja
BEUPA	Basic Education in Urban Poverty Areas
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CAPE	Creative Arts and Physical Education
CCT	Centre Coordinating Tutor
CHANCE	Child-Centred Alternatives for Non-Formal Community Based Education
COPE	Complimentary Opportunities for Primary Education
DEO	District Education Office
DES	Directorate of Education Standards
EFA	Education for ALL
ELS	Empowering Life-long Skills Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPRC	Education Policy Review Commission
EPRC	Education Policy Review Commission
ESSP	Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan
GKMA	Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area
IMU	Instructional Materials Unit
LCV	Local Council 5
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
NFE:	Non-Formal Education
NPA	National Planning Authority
PLE	Primary leaving Examination
PPDA	Public Procurement and Disposal
PTC	Primary Teachers College



PTE	Primary Teacher Education
SAS	Senior Assistant Secretary
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMC	School Management Committee
STEP	Science Technology Equipment Production
TCRP	Thematic Curriculum Review Panel
TIET	Teacher Instruction Education and Training
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of statistics
UNEB	Uganda National Examination Board
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPE	Universal Primary Education

Executive Summary

An adequate and efficiently implemented primary school curriculum is a foundation to attainment of UPE outcomes. In particular, the primary education curriculum is critical to attainment of the following UPE objectives:

- i) Providing the facilities and resources to enable every child to enter and remain in school until the primary cycle of education is complete;
- ii) Making education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities;
- iii) Ensuring that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans; and
- iv) Reducing poverty by equipping every individual with basic skills.

To this end, this evaluation set out to review and analyze the primary school curriculum with regard to relevance of its elements and the extent of its implementation towards achieving UPE objectives. A rigorous approach that involved quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques was employed to evaluate Uganda's current primary school curriculum. This approach was in line with OECD evaluation criteria of assessing: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the curriculum towards achievement of UPE outcomes. Four main findings emerge from the evaluation:

Evaluation Findings

1. **The current primary school curriculum is relevant and adequate to the attainment of UPE objectives, however, the nature and manner in which it is implemented fails the realization of its intended objectives.** The aims of the primary curriculum are comprehensive in that they address the core national and international development agenda. In line with UPE objectives, the curriculum content covers the three knowledge domains and generally focuses on universalization of literacy, numeracy, science and technology, and the skills for the world of work. The thematic curriculum is relevant to among others addressing poor mastery of literacy and numeracy. Unfortunately, the primary school curriculum is not being implemented as intended. The implementers rarely focus on realization of curriculum aims on two fronts: the content delivered and the nature and manner of assessment.
 - i) **First, contrary to the curriculum design, the content delivered in practice is narrow, only focusing on the cognitive domain at the expense of the other equally relevant content** (i.e. Creative Arts and Physical Education). This is on the backdrop that the other content beyond the cognitive domain is not examinable. This narrow interpretation and implementation of the curriculum content creates an illusion that the content is totally irrelevant.
 - ii) **Secondly, contrary to the curriculum, the purpose of assessment in practice is biased towards preparing learners to pass the highly staked final examinations instead of improving the learning and teaching processes.** In practice, schools are assessing learners to prepare them to pass the highly staked final examinations and/or discontinue the students who do not measure up the expected academic

standards of the schools. Towards this, a large number of schools administer tests to their pupils daily in order to maximise pass rates and not knowledge and skills attainment. This practice is more prevalent in private schools (42.5%) compared to the government aided schools (36%). This trend is mainly due to the need to prepare learners to pass the national examinations in order for schools to attract more learners, since schools use assessment results as a marketing tool rather than as a formative tool for teaching and learning processes. As such, the outcomes of Uganda's assessment practices have very remote connection to acquiring knowledge and skills that learners need to succeed today and in the future. For instance, 85% of the teachers use teacher-centred and examination-centred methods in contradiction of the curriculum guidelines. Only 15% of the teachers use pupil-centred methods such as group work, experiments, demonstrations and role plays, personalized learning, and differentiated instruction among others.

2. **Despite its relevance and adequacy, there are several disconnections and contradictions in the current primary school curriculum that create inconsistencies towards the realization of its intended objectives.** These disconnections include:
- i) **There exists contradiction in language of teaching instruction and that of assessment.** At lower primary level the local language is used for instruction and yet English is used for assessment. This is a contradiction which could lead to unfair assessment.
 - ii) **There is also a contradiction in class teacher system which is non-responsive to the current bulged class sizes in lower primary.** The findings reveal that the requirement that each classroom at lower primary should be taught by one teacher (class teacher) is disconnected from the realities of the UPE. Foremost, majority of the classrooms are heavily populated to be managed by one class teacher. In addition, the same teacher may not be talented, interested and competent to teach all the thematic areas hence compromising the quality of learning the pupils are exposed to.
 - iii) **The subject-based upper primary cycle is disconnected from the lower primary curriculum and the lower secondary curriculum which are designed around thematic learning areas.**
 - iv) **There is a disconnect between curriculum development and the approval of textbooks and non-textbook materials for use in curriculum delivery.** While curriculum development and ensuring its implementation as intended are a function of NCDC, the approval of textbooks and non-textbook materials for use in curriculum delivery is a function of Instruction Materials Unit of the MoES. This separation of related functions creates a disconnect between curriculum design and implementation materials and is likely to lead to mismatches between the two.
 - v) **There is limited collaboration amongst key institutions during curriculum development and implementation.** Most of the institutions continue to work in silos which has led to mismatches and misalignments between for instance the

curriculum and assessment practices; and between the primary school curriculum and the primary teachers' curriculum.

3. **Weak ownership of the current primary school curriculum, particularly by implementers is limiting its effective implementation.** While the NCDC's indication is that the process of developing the primary school curriculum is highly consultative, in practice, the process is highly centralized and heavily top-down. This has created a double jeopardy of limited acceptability of the curriculum and the illusion that the curriculum is totally irrelevant, since most of the stakeholders feel that they are not extensively and intensively consulted. As such, the implementers fail to implement the primary school curriculum as intended.
4. **The institutional capacity for effective implementation and monitoring current primary school curriculum is weak and not adequately facilitated to achieve its mandate.** There are systemic weaknesses within the institutional, and legal/policy architecture for curriculum development. The key institutions that lead the development and implementation of the curriculum are significantly constrained in terms of human resources, financial resources and physical materials. For instance:
 - i) **The NCDC and DES are acutely incapacitated, both in terms of human and financial resources required, to develop a relevant curriculum, and effectively monitor and evaluate its implementation.** The NCDC is not able to fully execute its monitoring mandate due to financial and human resources' inadequacies. In particular the institution's budget has declined over the years, failing it to sustain the perpetual curriculum development activities particularly those that require moving to the field. To this end, there have been few reviews of the curriculum and syllabi. These challenges also apply to DES as it is currently struggling to ensure that the curriculum is implemented through the inspection function. Further, in as much as Local Governments are implementing the curriculum, they have limited capacity to effectively monitor and evaluate the curriculum.
 - ii) **There has also been under investment in enabling teachers to implement the curriculum. For instance:**
 - a) **Seventeen per cent (17%) of the teachers lack the competences to correctly interpret the primary school curriculum.** This forces them to rely on national examination past-papers for their teaching. Nonetheless, it was noticed that even the competent teachers were constrained in interpreting the curriculum by the examination results-oriented system.
 - b) **Further, the majority (57%) of primary school teachers do not plan their lessons while 23% who plan, do it poorly and as ritual without regard to the tenets of a lesson plan.** This practice is against education policy.
 - c) **A majority of the teachers work in a constrained environment with inadequate teaching aids where only chalk is the only instruction material that they are assured of on a daily basis.** Very few teachers have access to



lesson planning books (22%), teachers' guides (22%), dusters (30%), geometry rulers (25%), geometry instruments (27%), dictionary (34%), wall maps (12%), pens (27%), and manila papers (29%).

These are fundamental barriers to the effective design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum towards the realization of the UPE objectives. Therefore, in order to ensure primary education curriculum delivers improved UPE outcomes, the following are recommended:

Recommendations

1. Urgently invest in teachers' professional development to enable them efficiently and effectively implement the curriculum. This requires the following:

- i) **Rejuvenate the teacher professional development support mechanisms particularly the Coordinating Centres (CCs) and the Coordinating Centre Tutors (CCTs).** These help to provide on-site reorientation and professional support for teachers in the identified key areas of weakness including lesson planning, assessment, classroom pedagogy and curriculum interpretation. It is critical to provide transport (or service the currently grounded CCT motorbikes) and other means of facilitation for CCTs to reach as many schools in need support in time.
- ii) **Establish a National Institute of Teacher Education and Development** to provide leadership for training, reskilling and development of the teachers and education administrators for them to be able to deliver the curriculum as intended.
- iii) **MoES should implement the scheme of service as a tool to motivate, attract, retain suitably qualified teachers and reinforce school level supervision.** The evaluation found that school level supervision is one of the key practices that make private schools perform better than public schools.
- iv) **Enforce strict entry and training requirements for primary school teachers beyond those that require one to barely pass a few subjects.** This will strengthen primary school teachers capability at pedagogy and curriculum interpretation and implementation. These have a bearing on the relatively weak candidates that barely fulfil the requirements to join the teaching profession. Any education system that has a future, recruits the best candidates for teachers through a rigorous selection and training process. Therefore, it is recommended that the minimum entry requirement into the teacher training college should either be raised to A-level or the length of training should be raised from the current 2 years to 3 years to provide ample time to adequately skill the teacher trainee.

2. **The NCDC should develop a comprehensive strategy for meaningful and perpetual engagement with all stakeholders in curriculum development.** This is required to address the double constraints of acceptability and relevance, with the core curriculum implementing institutions particularly the schools and local authorities. The strategy should provide for an unconstrained platform through which schools and local authorities can play a central role in the planning and development of the curriculum.

- 3. Urgently strengthen NCDC into a robust institution (i.e. one stop centre for curriculum activities) to undertake critical research, and conduct credible consultations, write and continuously review the curriculum as the country requires.** This necessitates that an adequate budget is provided to enable the institution fully execute its mandate. In particular, NCDC should be resourced to fill the currently 68 (44%) vacant positions that are required to execute its mandate.
- 4. Undertake targeted legal and policy reforms to enable for meaningful multi-sectoral collaborations in the development and implementation for the primary curriculum.** Particularly, there is need for legal provisions to: ensure the joint development of the primary school and primary teacher training curricula, and require close collaboration between the assessment bodies and curriculum developers. Above all, laws, policies that perpetuate the silo mode operations in curriculum development and implementation should be dismantled.
- 5. Harmonize and enforce the language of instruction and assessment policy for the lower primary school regardless of whether private or government to optimize its intended benefits.** Many schools are hesitant to implement this policy given the misalignment between the language of instruction and language of assessment at the lower primary level. They observe that it is of no essence to instruct learners in local language, yet assessment is in English. There is therefore need to align the language of assessment to the language of instruction at the lower primary school section.
- 6. The entire Primary School Curriculum should be based on themes to eliminate the disconnect between lower and upper primary.** There is need to make the whole primary school curriculum thematic to ensure alignment not only within the entire primary school curriculum but also between the primary and the lower secondary curricular which is as well arranged around thematic learning areas.
- 7. Adequately invest in Primary Schools to enable them deliver the curriculum.** The MoES should provide in time, the threshold amount of physical infrastructure and teaching materials to every public school to effectively operate. At the minimum, each school should be guaranteed at least 7 permanent classrooms, a staffroom and separate toilets for boys and girls. Also, according to the preliminary costs' analysis, capitation grant should be raised from UGX 10,000 to a minimum of UGX 59,000 per year per pupil, if schools are to optimally operate.
- 8. The inspection function should be capacitated to quality assure curriculum implementation.** Towards this, the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) and Local Governments (LGs) should be capacitated in terms of budgets and human resources to undertake quality inspection and instruction. In particular, the current human resources for the inspection function cannot enable it undertake quality inspection and instruction. For instance, some LGs have extreme inspector-to-school ratios to the tune of 1:450 compared to the internationally recommended 1:40. Therefore, adequate facilitation should enable DES and LGs to conduct the required and desired inspection rounds.
- 9. The role to approve the list of vetted textbooks to be procured should revert to NCDC.** This is intended to promote separation of powers and address the quality aspect of textbooks being produced. IMU should lead the procurement process only up to the development of the list of



text book for approval by NCDC. The NCDC through its Board shall then examine and confirm evaluation aspects and approve the list of the textbooks that meet 100% of the curriculum content.

10. **The MoES through UNEB should embark on a phased overhaul of the current assessment regime to ensure that it examines the entire curriculum and to make it aligned to the entire curriculum.** In addition, teachers should be trained on the practicum of undertaking continuous assessment, which is the preferred method recommended by the curriculum. Equally, materials that complement continuous assessment should be provided to teachers on time.
11. **The guidelines on assessment should be enforced to limit the unethical practice of frequent (daily tests and weekly tests) testing of learners in schools.** From the findings, some schools give tests to their learners daily, meaning that such schools have no time to implement the curriculum but to drill children on the anticipated examination questions. Alternatively, there is need for a comprehensive assessment policy to define the assessment that needs to be undertaken in schools and at the national level and prescribe the consequences for non-compliance. Above all, given that the damaging assessment regimes are perpetuated by among others the high stakes that parents, learners, and schools have in the assessment process, the long-term strategy would be for stakeholders to meaningfully engage and seek convergence in opinions on the purpose and scope of assessment in primary schools.

Conclusion

The current primary school curriculum is relevant and adequate to the attainment of UPE objectives. It does not require major overhaul to deliver intended UPE outcomes. However, to make the curriculum effective, there are areas that need to be urgently addressed to ensure that the curriculum is implemented efficiently and effectively as intended to achieve UPE outcomes.

SECTION ONE

1.0. Background and Context

The Uganda Vision 2040 as well as the first and second National Development Plans (NDPI and NDPII - 2010/11 – 2014/15 & 2015/16 – 2019/20 respectively) emphasized the importance of reforming the curriculum as a pre-requisite for production of quality human resources necessary for socioeconomic transformation. This is on the backdrop that the curriculum is not only considered as an input into the education system but also a key determinant of economic growth through its effect on total factor productivity of the human capital. This therefore means that the curricula must be relevant particularly to the needs of society and the nation. Hence, there is a case for countries to continuously review and revise their national curricula to make them responsive to the needs peculiar to the society and the nation. Over the past four decades, Uganda like most of the Sub-Saharan African countries has been involved in educational reforms, leading to new and/ or revised curricular (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). But even after such reforms, the curricula issues continue dominating the current education debate.

The current primary school curriculum of Uganda has been evolving to respond to the needs of society. However, the most significant curriculum evolution happened from 1986 under the National Resistance Movement Government, when discussions on reforms in the education sector gained momentum. In 1988 the government of Uganda appointed an Education Policy Review Commission to make recommendations for the reform of the education system in Uganda. The recommendations of the Commission in its report of 1989, led to the writing of the 1992 Government White Paper on Education. Thereafter, on 8th September 1992, Government appointed a Curriculum Review Task Force to study the recommendations in the White Paper and recommend to Government possible implementation strategies.

In its report, the Task Force, among others, provided for a national curriculum framework, which was to guide syllabus development at the different education levels, in light of the national and educational aims and objectives. The Task Force was also tasked to examine ways of improving the quality of education in Uganda. The Team on the Task force comprised experts from the inspectorate, National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), Teacher Education, College of Business Studies Nakawa, primary schools, Makerere faculty of Education and the Institute of Teacher Education Kyambogo.

The emphasis of curriculum reforms has mainly been on the primary education in relation to the other sub-sectors of Uganda's education. This is partly explained by the fact that it is at the primary level that the capacity to learn, to read and use math, to acquire information, and to think critically about that information are developed. It is also the gateway to all higher levels of education that train the scientists, teachers, doctors, and other highly skilled professionals that every country requires. A large body of research points to the catalytic role of primary education (O'Connell and Birdsall 2001). Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002) estimated an average global private return on primary education at 27 percent. Primary education increases effectiveness of investments in health and sanitation which heavily depend on good basic knowledge and general awareness across the citizenry. The evidence indicates that primary education affects not only the incomes but also broader workforce outcomes such as health, productivity, participation in the formal labour market,

work in more modern sectors and (particularly for women) the ability to earn regular income from work and contribute to national development (Jaiyeoba, 2007). Such evidence partly explains the drift towards universalization of basic education.

Uganda started her journey towards the universalization of basic education in 1997. The introduction of UPE in 1997 necessitated further review of the primary curriculum on the understanding that a relevant primary school curriculum would attract and retain learners in school, a core objective of UPE policy. Accordingly, the thrusts for the 1999/2000 primary curriculum review were quality and relevance. Unfortunately, even after the 1999/2000 review, the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE, 2006) conducted by UNEB revealed that majority of learners were still failing to acquire adequate numerical and literacy skills in both local language and English. Subsequent studies on the perpetual poor-quality learning outcomes continued to implicate the primary education curriculum as being of questionable quality and relevance. These called for and led to a spiral of further curriculum reviews that culminated into among others the current primary school curriculum commonly referred to as the Thematic Curriculum.

The current primary education curriculum is designed to deliver the following UPE objectives:

1. Providing the facilities and resources to enable every child to enter and remain in school until the primary cycle of education is complete;
2. Making education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities;
3. Ensuring that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans; and
4. Reducing poverty by equipping every individual with basic skills.

To this end, this evaluation sets out to review and analyze the primary school curriculum with regard to relevance of its elements and the extent of its implementation towards achieving UPE objectives. This report is one of the five inter-related thematic evaluations¹ of the national comprehensive review of the UPE.

1.1 Scope of the Evaluation

The overarching objective of this curriculum evaluation is to assess the extent to which the Ugandan Primary Education Curriculum has facilitated the achievement of the UPE objectives. In line with OECD evaluation criteria, the assessment encompasses areas of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

In particular, the curriculum evaluation has focused on the following:

- a) Review and analyse reforms in the country's primary education curriculum in terms of the adequacy/relevance and gaps of the current legal and institutional frameworks;
- b) Assess the relevance of the current curriculum to the individual learner, society and national goals;
- c) Assess the extent to which the current primary school curriculum is being implemented in schools;

¹ These include: Evaluation of the Policy, legal, regulatory and institutional framework of UPE; Costing and financing frameworks of the UPE; Modeling and Forecasting education learning outcomes; Teacher Education; and School inspection practices

- d) Draw lessons from best practices to inform recommendations on curriculum design, implementation and M&E.

1.2 Methodology

To assess the evaluation objectives for the curriculum design thematic area, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were adopted. This involved collection and analysis of primary and secondary data from key stakeholders and review of relevant documents.

1.2.1 Data Sources and Tools Used

In order to ascertain the impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the primary school curriculum, secondary and primary data was collected and analyzed. Most of the secondary data was collected during the scoping studies. The secondary data sources involved existing laws, policies, guidelines, regulations guiding curriculum design, implementation and M&E. In addition, relevant reports on studies related to primary curriculum reviews were used.

Primary data was collected from the LGs and the respective stakeholder institutions which include; Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs), National Teachers Colleges (NTCs), National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and Local Government (LG) Administration. The LG data collection was conducted in two phases. Phase one covered efficiency and effectiveness, while phase two covered curriculum, community participation and Teacher Training modules.

Efficiency and effectiveness data collection phase entailed face to face interviews and capturing of required data from the LCV, CAO, DEO, SAS, SMC, Head teachers and teachers, while in phase II under the Curriculum, Teacher training and Community participation modules, data was collected from the DIS, CCTs, UPE Beneficiaries, the PTA Members, School Management, Parents, Head Teachers and Teachers.

The key tool used to collect data from the targeted respondents was a structured questionnaire. These were administered to teachers, CCTs, DIS', SMC/PTA, key informants from the Basic Education department, DES, NCDC and TIET department. The questionnaire for teachers targeted two (2) categories of teachers i.e. lower primary and at upper primary from each school.

1.2.2 Sampling Technique

The EMIS was the sampling frame that informed selection of schools for the study. Since it was a national survey, the study stratified the whole country covering ten (10) regions namely; Greater Kampala Metropolitan Areas (GKMA), Central I, Central II, Western, South Western, Eastern I (Bukedi & Teso), Eastern II (Busoga), Acholi, West Nile and Karamoja. This stratification approach is normally used by UBOS. From each of these regions ten (10) districts were selected based on a criterion of: Old (formed by 1997); New (formed between 1997- 2008); Recent (formed between 2008- 2014); and Hard-to-Reach. Using simple random sampling, a sample of six (6) schools was selected from each of the ten (10) districts in a region. To provide for fair representation, mechanisms were included to select schools from both rural and urban sub-counties. To this end, three schools were randomly chosen from urban local authorities while the remaining three were from rural local authorities. The key informants from the MoES departments and agencies including

Basic Education department, DES, NCDC and TIET department were purposively selected to form part of the participants in the study.

1.2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis mainly entailed descriptive statistics and content analysis. Research assistant provided support in making data ready for analysis and in performing the preliminary analyses which culminated into cross-tabulations and other descriptive statistics. Triangulation technique was used to corroborate evidence generated from the quantitative and qualitative data.

The Research assistants aided in the process of data coding where extensive datasets were condensed in a systematic way into smaller analyzable units through the creation of categories and concepts from the data derived from open ended questions. Data collected included multiple responses and was therefore entered using Microsoft Access data entry interface. Data cleaning was undertaken to find possible outliers, non-normal distributions, and other anomalies in the data. The process was directly supervised by NPA technical staff.

The data was analyzed in stages and by categories including: Policy makers - administrative and technical (CAO, LCV, DEO); and implementers (Head teachers, teachers, SMC, and SAS). To explore the characteristics of UPE variables, descriptive statistics were computed. The averages, standard deviations, proportions and frequencies were computed for each of the variables. Graphs and charts were drawn to present the analysis in graphical form. More specifically, frequencies and percentages were computed for all the variables generated. To assess performance between demographic characteristics (age, sex, and district) bivariate analysis was performed. The obtained data were cleaned and analyzed using SPSS 23 and STATA 13 software.

1.2.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were applied in the whole process of the study. The researchers informed participants of the purpose of the evaluation and sought their consent to participate. The evaluation was therefore conducted in full cognizance of ethical responsibility to safeguard the respondents by maintaining the investigations within the scope of the evaluation. Participants had the freedom to join and leave the study at will confidentiality was upheld in all respects and data was anonymized.

1.3. Structure of the Report

The report contains six sections. Section one contains the background and context to the evaluation and the methodological approach. Section two presents an evaluation of the development process of the Ugandan primary school curriculum while section three examines the relevance of the elements of the Ugandan primary school curriculum in light of the national education goals including UPE. Section four examines the extent to which the Ugandan primary school curriculum is being implemented to achieve the intended aims and those of the UPE. Curriculum monitoring and evaluation is presented in section five and conclusions and recommendations are presented in section Six.

SECTION TWO

2.0. Curriculum Development in Uganda

2.1. Evolution of the Uganda Primary Education Curriculum

The current Uganda's Primary Education Curriculum has gone through a series of reforms aimed at improving the quality of children's learning in primary schools. Before the advent of the colonialists, Uganda had indigenous/traditional forms of education that mainly aimed at moulding children to fit in society, promote harmony in society, promote cultural heritage, enable youth acquire and apply life skills to solve individual and society problems, and develop character and respect for elders (Muyanda-Mutebi,1996). It is critical to note that there were no formal educational institutions, neither was there a formal curriculum. Also, instruction was freely given by elders and peers informed by their experiences.

On arrival of the missionaries, the education landscape of the country significantly changed. The formal education system was introduced between 1900-1924 and the curriculum was mainly to cater for the interests of the missionaries. To this end, the curriculum mainly entailed the study and practice of religion, some basic writing and rudimentary arithmetic. Accordingly, the Bible was the key instruction material. It is critical to note that besides the curriculum being foreign to the indigenous people, the formal schools were as well not accessible to all Ugandans as they were preserved for children of the chiefs who were being prepared for positions of responsibility in society. It is therefore clear that the current woes of Uganda's education, that is, irrelevance and access started about this time.

Since the introduction of formal education by the missionaries, all subsequent efforts of the different education stakeholders have been directed towards how to provide relevant education to all Ugandans. Various commissions have previously been constituted to study and make recommendations on how to make Ugandan education responsive to the needs to society. Critical of all the commissions was the Castle commission that was constituted immediately after independence to restructure the country's education according to the needs of society. This culminated into the first post-independence primary school curriculum of 1965 with 12 subjects including Art and Craft, Science, English Language, Mother Tongue, Luganda, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Religious Education, History, Geography and Civics (Muyanda-Mutebi,1996).

In 1973 the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) was created with the view to domesticate the curriculum since, in the eyes of the general public, even the post-independence curriculum was perceived as foreign. Specifically, the NCDC was expected to determine the curriculum content and appropriate teaching methodologies, and overseeing the development of appropriate textbooks and learning aids.

A second post-independence curriculum was launched in 1975 and this placed significant emphasis on science, maths, and vocational subjects including carpentry, agriculture, bricklaying, among others. This was on the backdrop that vocationalisation of education would enable more Ugandans to be absorbed into the then shrinking job market due to the economic sanctions of the time.

Unfortunately, the aims and objectives of the 1975 curriculum could not be realised due to the civil strife that the country experienced.

Most education historians argue that significant education reforms, policies and programmes started after 1986 with the coming in effect of the National Resistance Movement government. These reforms were necessitated by the prevailing circumstances punctuated by a failing economy and systemic education sector challenges. To this end, government instituted the Education Policy Review Commission of 1987 to look into issues pertaining to education financing, curriculum, education aims and objectives, relevance of education provided and access to education.

2.2. Overview of the current National Primary School Curriculum

Uganda's primary curriculum has undergone several reforms including the 1965, 1967, 1990, 1999 and 2007-2010 reforms which have, however, only resulted into minimal changes in critical aspects such as the scope, sequencing, relevance and language (Ezati, 2016). The other change has been the thematic formatting and recontextualization of subjects. As such, there is little distinction between for instance the 1967 curriculum that had 12 subject areas and the current curriculum (2007- 2010) that merged and repackaged subjects to 9.

The 1990 curriculum reform was undertaken with the key objective of making basic education relevant to the needs of individuals by equipping them with basic skills which resulted into a new curriculum developed in 1998/1999. The concerns on the 1998/1999 curriculum included that:

1. The curriculum had too many subjects (10 subjects) and too much content hence very expensive particularly in terms of textbooks;
2. There were high cost implications of subjects like Integrated Production Skills (IPS);
3. There was lack of critical focus on literacy skills; and
4. There was lack of detailed implementation planning and a dedicated budget.

It was further noted that teachers received the curriculum support textbooks very late, after many years and that the teacher training curriculum had not been adjusted in alignment with the new primary curriculum (Ward, Penny and Read, 2006, pp. 40-41).

To address the concerns raised over the 1998/1999 curriculum, another review was undertaken and concluded in 2005. The review found out that the new curriculum had not significantly improved pupils' performance as evidenced by low literacy levels in English and in Local Languages. It concluded that because pupils failed to develop early literacy, they performed poorly in all curriculum subjects (Ward, Penny and Read, 2006, p. 42). Accordingly, it was recommended that there was need to:

- i) Divide the curriculum into two distinct phases namely P1 - P3 and P5-P7 with separate aims and objectives;
- ii) Design a transition year (P4) to support the switch from local language as a language of instruction to English and from thematic curriculum to a subject based curriculum;
- iii) Make the P1-P3 curriculum emphasize more the development of literacy, numeracy, and key life skills which would be achieved by restructuring the curriculum around a thematic base. In addition, it was recommended that the number of hours allocated to reading, writing and basic numeracy be increased;
- iv) Make the P4 curriculum light on content so as to enable the P4 teacher concentrate on making a successful language transition from local language to English;

- v) Make the P5-P7 curriculum based on identifiable skills and competences for each subject;
- vi) Limit the number of core subjects examinable at PLE primarily by pen and paper exams to English, Integrated Science, Social Studies, Mathematics and Local language;
- vii) Maintain Religious Education (RE) and Physical Education (PE) as separate subjects on the curriculum;
- viii) Teach performing Arts and Physical Education as separate subjects and be assessed through continuous assessment only; and,
- ix) Ensure that all local languages used in P1-P4 have approved orthographies and an established literature suitable for the development of early literacy and access to trained local language specialist teachers.

Acting on the guidance and recommendations from the 2005 evaluation report, the Ministry of Education and Sports through National Curriculum Development Centre embarked on the review, development and roll out of the fifth post-independence Primary Schools curriculum for all schools in the country. The roll out started with Primary one class and continued adding one class yearly up to primary seven.

The review was handled in three main cycles namely: The Thematic Curriculum (P1-P3) which was rolled out in 2007-2009; the Transition Curriculum (P4 class) was rolled out in 2010 and; the Upper Primary Curriculum (P5 – P7) rolled out between 2010-2012. The first cohort of the revised curriculum sat for their Primary Leaving Examinations in 2012.

2.2.1. Cycle 1 (Primary One – Three): The Thematic Curriculum

A thematic approach was used to organize the competences and knowledge content for P1 – P3. The curriculum is based on three main principles namely: (i) rapid development of literacy, numeracy and life skills at lower primary; (ii) the treatment of concepts holistically, under themes of immediate meaning and relevance to the learner; and, (iii) the presentation of learning experiences in languages in which the learners are already proficient. The curriculum is based on the critical assumption that higher achievement levels in literacy are attained when children study in a language of which they already have a strong oral command. Therefore, all learning materials used in the first three years of primary education are provided in the child's own language or a language familiar to the child. The Thematic Curriculum (P1-P3) has the following key features:

1. The use of themes that interest children;
2. The adoption of the class-teacher-system;
3. Use of non-text book materials;
4. The use of Local Language/language commonly used by the community as a medium of instruction; and,
5. The use of continuous assessment of learners' achievement.

The curriculum themes selected are those that are most likely to be relevant to children reflecting everyday lives and activities as well as educational aims and objectives. The themes focus on the knowledge and skills to be acquired by learners which include literacy, numeracy, life skills and values. Religious Education and Physical Education, however, are presented separately and taught

alongside the themes. There are twelve themes per class. The content in the themes is organized under the strands which include; News, Oral Literature, Mathematics, Literacy I, Literacy II, English, Creative Performing Arts (Music, Art and Crafts), Physical Education, Religious Education, Free Activity and Library. Each strand indicates the competences to be developed and demonstrated by the learners.

2.2.2. Cycle 2 (Primary Four): The Transition Curriculum;

This is the second cycle of the primary education curriculum. It starts in Primary Four (P4) with the gradual transition from the local language to English as a medium of instruction. The P4 curriculum is unique because it is placed between two levels, the Thematic and the Subject-Based arrangement. The children transfer from the theme-based to subject-based curriculum. They also gradually shift from using local language to English as a medium of instruction. The focus for P4 is on the development of English language since it is the language of instruction from P4 to P7. It emphasizes rearranging content, concepts and skills rather than introducing new content or concepts. The organizing principle is subject-based. Children and teachers start the year using the local language/commonly spoken language of the community during the learning and teaching process and there is a steady increase in the use of English as the medium of instruction. Compared to the upper primary curriculum (P5-P7), there appears to be no difference in design with transition (P4) class.

2.2.3. Cycle 3 (Primary Five –Seven) Subject-Based Curriculum;

This phase is similar to the 1999 curriculum, in which the concepts, knowledge and skills are arranged around subjects. Moreover, it has the same subjects as at P4. Emphasis is on the development of both subject and language competences in order to develop the literacy skills. The medium of instruction is English and local language is taught as a subject. At this level the learners are also being prepared for post primary education. Accordingly, the primary school subject syllabuses are supposed to be aligned with the secondary school curriculum. Two types of competences are introduced: subject and language competences and are based on the content of the topic. The language competences aim at promoting children's confidence in the use of English or local language for both oral and written forms. The subjects taught at this level include: Mathematics, English, Local Languages, Kiswahili, Social Studies, Integrated Science, Religious Education, Creative Arts and Physical Education (CAPE). There are three learning areas under CAPE: CAPE I (Music Dance and Drama), CAPE 2 (Physical Education), CAPE 3 (Art and Technology).

Cross-Cutting Issues; the curriculum considers cross cutting issues. Cross-cutting issues are concerns that surface in the curriculum as a result of changes in society, therefore, including them in the curriculum creates early awareness, and development of positive behaviour in children. These issues are not limited to any single learning/subject area. Examples of such issues include: Child abuse and neglect; Children's rights and responsibilities; Gender responsive education; Special needs and inclusive education; Environmental education; HIV/AIDS; Skills-oriented education; Information Communication Technology (ICT); Peace education; Democracy and voter education; Road safety education; Ethics and integrity; Sexual and Reproductive Health, financial literacy, Emergency preparedness and risk reduction.

2.2.4. Other Reforms in Uganda's Primary Education Curriculum

In as much as the introduction of the UPE programme ameliorated particularly the cost barriers to access to primary education, reports continue to indicate that a significant number of some school-age going children are not attending school while many of those that enrol do not finish the primary education cycle. Various cross-cutting issues and complexities are implicated in this scenario. To this end, government through the MoES and the non-state actors have designed complementary curricula as a strategy to ensure that every child enrolls into UPE and stays till the end of the primary education cycle.

These programmes were developed in areas where the inherent geographical, economic, cultural, political and social factors tend to significantly inhibit children's access to primary education despite declaration of UPE. Such programmes are commonly referred to as Non-Formal Education (NFE) Programmes. These programs are spread out in different districts of Uganda and they include:

- (i) Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK);
- (ii) Complimentary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE);
- (iii) Basic Education in Urban Poverty Areas (BEUPA);
- (iv) Empowering Life-long Skills Education (ELSE);
- (v) Child-Centred Alternatives for Non-Formal Community Based Education (CHANCE);
- (vi) The Multi-Grade Education Programme in Kalangala; and,
- (vii) Non-Formal Education (NFE Mubende).

Most of these programmes use modified primary school curriculum to suit the nature of the learners targeted. For example, in some instances, the alternative programmes entail fast-tracking and acceleration of progress for learners that are thought not to be progressing normally. Some of the strategies include compressing particularly the lower primary school curriculum into 2 years. At the end of the two-year programme, the learners are prepared to enter the formal primary school system but at a higher level such as primary five.

The Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) is significantly unique from the national primary education curriculum and mainly aligned to the socio-economic lifestyle of the area. The ABEK curriculum entails themes like "Our Livestock" which were appreciated and approved by the native Karamojongs. In the next subsection, a review of the Multi-Grade Education Programme, which is an emerging trend in the Ugandan education, is undertaken.

2.2.4.1. The Multi-Grade Education Programme

On introduction of the UPE in 1997, it became clear that some places in Uganda had scanty population of children and very few teachers and classrooms within schools. By 2005, there were 113 primary schools with only one teacher, 235 schools with two teachers, 398 schools with 3 teachers, 506 schools with 4 teachers, 678 schools with 5 teachers and 812 schools with 6 teachers (Mulkeen & Higgins, 2009). Cumulatively, about 2,742 primary schools in Uganda had less than 7 teachers (Mulkeen & Higgins, 2009). These scenarios were paramount in a number of districts including Kalangala and Sembabule. Geographically, Kalangala has 84 Islands. Of these, 54 have

people living on them. There were only 18 primary schools in Kalangala at the time. This automatically meant that there were no schools on very many islands in Kalangala.

On the other hand, Sembabule was a district inhabited by nomadic people who could move from one place to another in search of grass for their cattle. It was also a sparsely populated district with very few schools and teachers. To address this situation, a multi-grade programme was developed where one teacher could combine pupils in different grades and teach them in one classroom at the same time. To accommodate this context, the primary school curriculum was reviewed and teachers' guides were developed that had combined lessons to guide a teacher on how to deliver lessons under such circumstances.

Some reports indicate that multi-grade teaching strategy improved access and internal efficiency in these hard-to-reach remote rural communities that were either sparsely populated and or pastoralists (Mulkeen & Higgins, 2009). Nonetheless, the same reports indicate that teachers who are implementing the programme are not provided with adequate training in multi-grade pedagogy. Moreover, multi-grade teaching requires modified instructional materials customised to suit the set-up of multi-grade teaching. These are not available. Besides, there is yet to be policy support to this kind of alternative education programme.

2.3. The Process of Primary Curriculum Development

Curriculum development, revisions and innovations are routine educational requirements to fit in the countries' visions and missions (Ali & Baig, 2012). Curriculum development is a continuous process to maintain education standards and keep abreast with changes in society.

This evaluation found that the NCDC tries as much as possible to use a holistic approach to curriculum development. According to the NCDC, curriculum development process involves the following stages: Needs assessment (desk research, benchmarking, field research); Policy formulation; developing curriculum; presentation to NCDC's Quality Assurance Committee; presentation to the Academic Steering Board; presentation to the NCDC Governing Council; development of support materials; piloting of the curriculum; orientation of implementers/users; refinement; Rollout; monitoring the implementation; curriculum evaluation; reviews and reforms.

Various stakeholders are said to be involved in the curriculum development process including teachers, Curriculum Specialists, Directorate of Education Standards (DES) officials, Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) officials, MOES officials, NCDC, learners, parents, community representatives and NGOs supporting development of education. Nonetheless, the general observation arising out of this evaluation is that NCDC does not conduct sufficient stakeholders consultations as expected, during the review and development of curricula.

2.3.1. The Development of the current Primary School Curriculum

The development of the current primary school curriculum started with a situation analysis of the old curriculum, which recommended that the old curriculum needed to be revised by among others organizing learning content for lower primary around theme areas that reflected the daily lives of learners. Moreover, it was observed that to accelerate the acquisition of literacy skills at lower primary, the language of instruction would be the one with which the learners were familiar.



Accordingly, the NCDC developed the thematic curriculum and teacher's guides to the curriculum for (P1-P3) providing clear guidance / methodology to the teachers on how to develop literacy and numeracy skills. Guidance was also given on how to handle other learning areas.

During the introduction of the Thematic curriculum, MoES developed numerous policies to give effect to the implementation of the new curriculum. Some of these included the "put books and materials into the hands of the learners' policy (MOES circular No 2/2005 of Jan 10th)", the class teacher system [Circular 2/05, (MoES)], use of local language as a language of instruction [Under Circular 3/05 (MoES)], and use of non-textbook materials in lower primary schools [Circular 2/05 (MoES 2005)]. Additionally, a circular communicating the changes in time allocation was issued [Circular 1/05 of 10/1/05 (MoES)] where literacy and numeracy were each allocated 5 lessons a week.

2.4. Conclusions on the Curriculum Development Process

2.4.1. *The process is heavily top-down*

In as much as the curriculum developers indicate that the development processes is highly consultative, it is very clear that the curriculum development process in Uganda is highly centralized and top-down. Whereas this is the norm in many countries, due to the fact that education is mainly government funded, there is a realization that, since implementation of the curriculum is decentralized, the schools and local authorities should take central role in the planning and development of the curriculum and these need to be extensively and intensively engaged to suggest a realistically relevant and achievable curriculum. This would address the double constraints of acceptability and relevance. Moreover, international best practice demands that room should be left for schools to as well mainstream their contextually specific concerns into the curriculum. This observation is valid based on the fact that contextually bound curricular such as ABEK have to some extent proved effective in improving school enrolment and retention.

2.4.2. *Consultations for Curriculum Review and Development are Treated as an Event*

From the evaluation, some participants including head teachers and teachers clearly indicated that the curriculum development process in the country is not cyclical in nature. Head teachers and teachers observed that they are only consulted whenever there was need to review or develop a curriculum rather than making consultations a continuous process to keep abreast with emerging issues about the curriculum that would not necessarily result into a new curriculum being developed. This scenario could be explained by the acute resource shortages being experienced by the NCDC.

2.4.3. *No Evidence of Philosophical Statement that Underpins the Curriculum*

Whereas it is an international best practice for a national curriculum to have a statement that clearly highlights the philosophy that underlie the curriculum, this evaluation did not come across one for the primary school curriculum. Neither were the key stakeholders who participated in the interview aware of it. It is critical that our curricular are based on a philosophy that the nation wants to underlie all curricular preparation. Most importantly, such philosophy must be disseminated to the curriculum implementers through various avenues including the subject syllabi.

2.5. Primary School Curriculum Institutional Framework

The key responsible institutions for the design, implementation, inspection and M&E of the primary education curriculum are: National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC); Directorate of Education Standards (DES); Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC); Directorate for Basic and Secondary Education at the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES); and Local Governments (LGs). The curriculum activities are coordinated by the MoES through the approach of the Education Sector Working Groups (ESWGs). This evaluation did not however establish evidence of a focus on curriculum issues under the ESWGs.

The evaluation of the effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and impacts of the curriculum institutional framework is reviewed in the sections below.

2.5.1. The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)

The NCDC was established by the NCDC Act Chapter 135, (2000), deriving from Decree No.7 of 1973. It is responsible for *inter-alia*; development of curricula and related materials for various levels of education (Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary and other Tertiary institutions), capacity building of stakeholders on curricula and matters related thereto.

The functions of the Centre include; initiating new syllabi, revising existing ones, carrying out curriculum reform, undertaking research, testing and evaluation to bring up-to-date and improve syllabi for school and college courses; investigating and evaluating the need for syllabus revision and curriculum reform at primary, secondary, tertiary levels of education, in pre-school and post-school education and in teacher education; collecting, compiling, analyzing and abstracting statistical information on curriculum and matters related to the curriculum, among others.

Evaluation findings

- i) The NCDC revised and rolled out primary school curriculum for the lower, transition and upper primary during the period 2007- 2012.
- ii) The center is acutely understaffed, operating at 56% of the established capacity. The current establishment of the Centre is 155 staff but only 87 are filled while 68 are vacant (see Table 1). Inadequate staff has delayed the centre to operationalize some critical functions. For example, the NCDC has differed the execution of many critical curriculum assignments such as the regular reviews and dissemination of the syllabi and teachers' guides. As a consequence, only 28 percent of the schools reported having a copy of the syllabus for each class;

Table 2. 1: Staffing Position of NCDC as at June 30th 2017

SN	Description	Established	Filled	Vacant
1	Director	1	1	0
2	Deputy Director	1	1	0
3	Principal Specialists	6	0	6
4	Senior Specialists	9	2	7
5	Specialists	60	36	24
6	Administration Department	27	24	3
7	Finance Department	9	8	1

8	Internal Audit	2	2	0
9	Production Unit	11	3	8
10	Procurement & Disposal Unit	4	2	2
11	STEPU	25	8	17
TOTAL		155	87	68

Source: NCDC Strategic Plan 2015/16-2019/20

- iii) Gaps were identified in the area of developing curriculum-aligned instructional materials including textbooks, schemes of work, wall maps and charts, and teachers' guides. This gap has led to the proliferation of non-curriculum aligned textbooks in the market and schools;
- iv) The absence of a functional Science and Technology Equipment Production Unit (STEPU) to produce non-textbook curriculum support materials in the area of Science and Technology has stifled the country's strategic direction of emphasizing the teaching and learning of science, technology and Maths;
- v) The total budget of NCDC has declined by 41 percent between FY2012/13 and FY2016/17 mainly brought about by reduction in donor government of Uganda funding (see table 2.2 below). This has constrained the capacity of the Agency to execute its mandate.

Table 2.2. NCDC Budget FY2012/13-2016/17 in UGX

FINANCIAL YEAR	DONOR	GoU Recurrent	GoU Development	NTR	Total
2012/2013	4,205,491,000	7,901,491,634	-	369,500,000	12,476,482,634
2013/2014	2,650,000,000	6,186,412,000	-	566,500,000	9,402,912,000
2014/2015	500,000,000	6,186,412,000	-	663,119,512	7,349,531,512
2015/2016	300,000,000	8,536,412,000	-	515,000,000	9,351,412,000
2016/2017	697,096,830	8,536,412,000	-	446,000,000	9,679,508,830
2016/2017	300,000,000	6,720,910,000	-	290,500,000	7,311,410,000

Source: NCDC

2.5.2. Directorate of Education Standards (DES)

The **Directorate of Education Standards (DES)** plays a very critical role of ensuring that schools implement the curriculum through quality teaching and assessment among others. The DES's mandate derives from the Education Act and requires the directorate to "provide a rational system of setting and defining standards and quality of education and training and to monitor the achievement of such standards and quality for continually improved education and sports in Uganda". Whereas school inspection remains one of the most critical interventions for improving and upholding education standards that are said to be on steady decline, this evaluation reveals that the inspectorate function in Uganda is in a very weak state to execute its mandate as required.

Evaluation Findings

- i). **The legal and institutional architectures perpetuate weak and disjointed inspection.** The current structure arrangement of the inspection function where the inspection at the district reports to the CAO and not director DES has impacted negatively on curriculum implementation. Equally, the requirement for the director for DES to report to the PS MoES remains a concern given that it could compromise the quality of the inspection report.
- ii). **Schools are not inspected as required.** Whereas the handbook for school Inspectors (Monitoring and Supporting Policy) stipulates that all schools are to be fully inspected at least once a year, and routinely inspected once a term, the findings show that by second term, 71% of the total schools had been inspected at least once. In as much this is a significant improvement in the general status of inspection (compared to 11% reported by Auditor General's report, 2012), it was found out that during inspection, more focus is given to government aided schools (88.6%) compared to only 62% and 25% of private schools and community schools respectively. Variations in inspection performance were also realised at district level where some districts reported as high as 100% of schools being inspected at least once in by end of June 2017 while others reported as low as 12.4% of the school being inspected at least once over the same period.
- iii). **The inspectorate is understaffed.** DES headquarters and regional offices are understaffed to efficiently conduct the supervision of LG inspectors. DES operates on a lean structure of 45 out of a staff establishment of 61 representing 73% of staffing.
- iv). **DES is inadequately funded.** Funding for DES has not kept pace with the growing number of schools. For example, the funding for DES stagnated at UGX 3 billion over the last 5 years. This was worsened by the reduction in the DES budget to UGX 1.8 billion over the last 2 FYs.
- v). **Absence of gazetted education standards.** Whereas DES has developed a number of inspection guidelines, there is absence of a compendium of standards to guide quality education implementation in the country.

2.5.3. Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB)

The **Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB)** is responsible for cognitive assessment of the curriculum. Currently, besides conducting the PLE examinations at the end of the primary cycle, the Board administers assessments at lower and upper primary to measure pupil's mastery of defined competences in literacy and numeracy as part of a broader diagnostic audit of the performance of the education system.

Evaluation findings

- i). **Digitalization of records.** Over the years, UNEB has managed to digitalize all examination records for safety, easy access and retrieval.
- ii). **Non-implementation of Continuous Assessment (CA) by UNEB.** Whereas the shift to CA is a valid strategic direction to pursue, this evaluation found out that its implementation is

yet to materialize. Rather, assessment remains summative, mainly focusing on cognitive domain and neglecting the skills-based domain.

- iii). **Persistent exam malpractices.** In as much as UNEB has built capacity to assess the national curriculum, this evaluation acknowledges serious weaknesses including inadequacies within the examination body that hinder its ability to deal with cases of examination malpractice. This continues to erode public confidence in the national assessment and as a consequence, training institutions including universities have started introducing pre-entry examinations on top of the UNEB assessment scores.
- iv). **Inadequate funding for UNEB.** UNEB continues to be affected by the increasing budget shortfalls due to inability of government to pay for all government sponsored candidates.

2.5.4. Ministry of Education and Sports

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) is mandated to provide technical support, guide, coordinate, regulate and promote quality education, training and sports to all persons in Uganda for national integration, development and individual advancement. With regards to the curriculum development, the MoES department for pre-primary and primary education is, among others, charged with providing the appropriate direction and guidance on the kind of curriculum required such that the NCDC can accordingly use such guidance as basis for review and development of curriculum. In addition, this department is mandated to provide for adequate budgets not only to procure instruction materials but also recruit qualified and competent primary teachers to implement the curriculum.

Evaluation findings

- i). **There has been a policy shift from an objective-based to competence-based curriculum.** The policy requires that learning is more skills-based rather than knowledge-based.
- ii). **Weak policy framework.** The evaluation established the absence of key policies that would aid the design, implementation, M&E of the curriculum. Examples include: text books and instruction materials policy; policy on assessment; school feeding policy; among others.

2.5.5. Local Governments

The local government Act (2015) empowers local governments LGs to among others oversee the implementation of the government and the councils' policies. Local governments provide all the decentralized social services including primary education and healthcare. They do so by providing the required resources, that is, human, financial and materials to service providers. With regards to primary education, LGs are mandated to ensure that schools implement the curriculum through quality assurance mechanisms including inspection and local legislation (ordinances). The district education office is particularly mandated with the responsibility to oversee the provision of the education service in the district. Among the key staff at the district education office include the District Education Officer (DEO), senior education officers, senior inspectors of schools, education officers and inspectors of schools.

Evaluation findings

- i) District local council chairpersons (LCV Chairpersons) indicated that UPE is relevant for their local communities and they use various means to support the implementation of the UPE policy in their respective districts. For instance, it was found that fairly many (38%) of districts have passed ordinances to support the implementation of UPE. Most of the ordinances aim at addressing child labour, school feeding and children enrolment and retention in school. Nonetheless, it was not possible for the leaders to indicate the impact of such ordinances. Other local government support is through community mobilization by sensitization through local meetings, radio talk-shows, and barazas.
- ii) **District Chairpersons observed that whereas the UPE policy is good for their communities, policies such as abolition of fees, automatic grade promotion, use of local language in instruction and requirement for parents to feed children in school need to be reviewed to improve its impact, relevance and sustainability.** For example, 53% of the LCV chairpersons indicated that the policy on automatic grade promotion compromises the quality of primary education and hence should be abolished and instead let academic progress be based on assessment. Additionally, 26% of the district leaders argue that abolition of tuition in primary schools has bred the culture of negligence and limited involvement in schools of parents and hence recommended regulated cost sharing in this regard. Further, the district leaders observed that implementation of the local language policy has been a challenge in schools given the lack of community support, inadequate local language teachers, diversity in languages and mismatch in language of instruction and language of assessment which is English. Finally, 50% of the district chairpersons noted that, contrary to the law on school feeding, parents/guardians, due to various reasons are not feeding children in schools.
- iii) **Districts local governments are incapacitated in terms of human, financial and materials to implement UPE. District chairpersons cited inadequate capitation grants (41.4%), inadequate conditional grants (70%), inadequate textbooks (54.1%), low teacher remuneration (61%), and limited facilitation for school inspection (59.7%) as some of the critical hindrances to their efforts to implementing the UPE policy.** The leaders also observed that local revenue is very low to fill the shortage between the government central government support and the actual needs of the districts.

2.5.6. Other Institutions that have a Role to Play in the Curriculum function

Other institutions which play a role in the curriculum function include; Education Service Commission (ESC), Private sector, Civil Society Organisations, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Development Partners. Other key non-state actors to the development and implementation of the national curriculum include; the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO; UNFPA, Irish AID, USAID, ILO, DFID and faith-based organizations.

2.6. Policy, Legal and Regulatory Framework Governing the Primary School Curriculum

The development, implementation and review of the curriculum in the country takes effect from both international and national legal regimes. Internationally, the curriculum is informed by The

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (2015) especially goal number 4. Nationally, the curriculum is informed by the Constitution, The 1992 Government White Paper on Education; The Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act (2008); the Local Government Act (1997); The National Development Frameworks including The Uganda Vision 2040 and NDP and the Sector Development Plans; the NCDC Act (2000); UNEB Act (1983); Early Childhood Development Policy; Guidelines on Violence Against Children in schools (2015); Abolition of school fees ; Automatic Promotion Policy; and the UPE guidelines. The critical policies that have a direct effect on the curriculum design, implementation and M&E are evaluated in the sections below.

2.6.1. The Constitution of Uganda

Evaluation findings

1. **The curriculum is implemented in line with the constitution of the republic of Uganda.** The constitution provides the National objectives and direct principles of state policy (section XVIII, part iii), which state that individuals, religious bodies and other nongovernmental 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.
2. **The use of local language as a medium of instruction in schools is consistent with Article 6 (3) of the constitution and literature.** Besides English being the official language in the country, Article 6 (2) provides for the use of any other language as a medium of instruction in schools or other educational institutions or for legislative, administrative or judicial purposes as may be prescribed by law.
3. **Some of the requirements of the constitution in relation to the curriculum are not being met.** Section 4 of the constitution provides that the State shall promote public awareness of this Constitution by— (a) translating it into Ugandan languages and disseminating it as widely as possible; and (b) providing for the teaching of the Constitution in all educational institutions and armed forces training institutions and regularly transmitting and publishing programmes through the media generally. However, this evaluation found that this is not well provided for in the curriculum and hence most of the schools, are not implementing these constitutional provisions.

2.6.2. The Government White Paper on Education (GWPE)

The white paper provides adequate basis for an effective curriculum. The GWPE contains the broad strategic direction deriving from the Education Policy Review Commission of 1987. The GWPE policy thrusts inform curriculum design, implementation, monitoring and review. Particularly, the following provisions in the GWPE are of consequence to curriculum development:

- i) Need to undertake curriculum review at primary and lower secondary levels with the intent to strengthen the bridges between education and society needs by emphasising vocational and skills training
- ii) Shift towards continuous assessment in the basic education sub-sector

- iii) Institute a mechanism to effectively monitor and follow-up pupils' academic progress and design remedial programmes for those that do not progress as expected due to various reasons.

2.6.3. National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) Act (2000)

The Act gives effect to the existence of the NCDC and prescribes the functions of the centre. Particularly, the Act empowers the NCDC to among others design, review and guide on implementation of the pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary and teacher education curricular; design and develop teaching aids and instruction materials including textbooks; and devising, testing and evaluating examination questions and methods of assessing students in liaison with other appropriate teaching and examining bodies.

Evaluation Findings

- i) **There are overlaps and conflicts in the mandate between NCDC, Kyambogo University, UNEB and MoES on curriculum design and implementation.** Whereas the law mandates NCDC to develop both the primary school curriculum and the primary teacher training curriculum, the latter is being performed by Kyambogo University, a training institution. This has greatly affected alignment of the two curricular given that each curriculum is developed independently. Moreover, good practices require separation of roles between curriculum design and implementation.
- ii) **When it comes to assessment, the NCDC Act and the UNEB Act are inadequate since they do not adequately provide for close collaboration between the two institutions to ensure that mechanisms are in place of ensuring that the examination questions that appear in the examination papers always test all the competences that are stipulated in the syllabus.** This may sometimes result into development of tests which are narrow in scope and or outside the curriculum to the disadvantage of some of the learners. Such a case may result in some of the learners not completing the cycle. This therefore means that there is need to put in place a policy which would make it possible to revisit the functions of both the curriculum and examination bodies, so as to ensure that the two institutions complement each other and most importantly ensure that the test items are from within what has been taught as provided for in the syllabus.
- iii) **In addition, mandate overlaps between the NCDC and the TIET department of the MoES have been acknowledged with regards to conducting orientations for the implementers of the curriculum.** This necessitates for more clarity on the roles of the different institutions at the different stages of the curriculum implementation level so that the two institutions can complement each other with the ultimate aim being the achievement of the UPE objectives.
- iv) **NCDC role of validating textbooks and instruction materials and their publishers and/suppliers, has been taken over by the Instruction Materials Unit of MoES.** NCDC was initially responsible for the preparation, approval and supply of textbooks (NCDC Act and GWPE recommendations 188, 189,190). Nonetheless, in order to separate roles, IMU was created in 2006 as an administrative measure to advise on procurement of textbooks, while the local private sector players took charge of producing the textbooks. However, the

IMU currently conducts the entire procurement process with minor involvement of NCDC which is charged with the validation of textbooks. There is need for the separation of roles for NCDC to retain the full authority to validate textbooks, publishers and bidders and issue a certificate of approval.

2.6.4. The UNEB Act 1983

This Act mandates UNEB to administer the national examinations in light of the existing curriculum. Besides conducting end of cycle examinations, UNEB has since 2000 been involved in evaluating the progress in literacy and numeracy achievements of learners at P3 and P6 under the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE). These are diagnostic assessments that are expected to not only gauge the level of curriculum implementation in terms of teaching and learning, but also inform the curriculum review process. The 1992 Government White Paper and the Curriculum review of 2004/5, recommended a shift from the summative pen and paper examinations to continuous assessment.

Evaluation Findings

- i). **The 1992 Government White Paper and the Curriculum review of 2004/5, recommendation of adapting continuous assessment as opposed to the summative pen and paper examinations is yet to be operationalized by UNEB.** The findings indicate that the UNEB assessment is still limited to purely summative pen and paper method.
- ii). **Only 5 out of the 10 subjects on the primary education curriculum are examined nationally.** The challenge arising from this is that schools concentrate on only those subjects which are reflected on the UNEB certificate. The subjects which are not examined² are not taught and yet these are the subjects which are skills-based by design and would significantly contribute to reducing poverty by equipping individuals with basic skills, a key objective of the UPE. Inspection reports indicated that the focus of the teaching is now on making learners pass, a practice that has escalated the prevalence of malpractices, albeit the strict measures put in place by UNEB to curb the vice.
- iii). **Continuous assessment is a challenge to implement.** This evaluation found out that whereas stakeholders observe that the current assessment regime is narrow and unable to bring out the best out of the learners, they maintain that continuous assessment is still a big challenge to implement. Foremost, most school teachers believe that frequent testing is in-itself continuous assessment. Teachers believe that continuous assessment is not a method of work but an extra load which requires extra pay. Thirdly, teachers have not been prepared enough to undertake continuous assessment. Moreover, the constraints within the primary education sector such as high pupil teacher ratios, inadequate instruction materials, among others, remain barriers to the full adoption of continuous assessment.

2.6.5. The Education Act (2008)

The Education Act (2008) provides overall guidance on the management and delivery of education services. The commitments highlighted in the Act give effect to the design and implementation of

² These subjects are Art and Technology, Music, Physical Education, Kiswahili and Local Language.

the primary school curriculum. The Act requires that the curriculum is inclusive and commits to mitigation of factors that form barriers to children's participation in education.

Evaluation Findings

- i). **There is no consequence for non-compliance to the legal provision on compulsory free education.** Whereas the Act is explicit with regards to basic education being free and compulsory, this is not being enforced and it looks as though basic education is optional. This lack of consequence for non-compliance to this provision hampers curriculum implementation and achievement of curriculum objectives due to inconsistent attendance, high dropout rates and overall low survival rates.
- ii). **There is lack of a concrete framework to give effect to the legal provisions on alternative basic education.** In as much as the Act in section 10(3(c)) requires Government to ensure that a child who drops out of school before completing primary education cycle attains basic education through alternative approaches to providing that education; it is clear that not many interventions have been put in place to operationalize this directive.

2.6.6. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy guidelines

Evaluation Findings

- i. **Absence of a policy document on UPE.** Whereas the UPE is the flagship programme of the education sector, there is no policy document detailing what UPE is and its implementation. What is available are various guidelines to that effect. Since the launch of the UPE programme in 1997, there has been a dramatic increase in enrolment from 2.5 million pupils in 1997 to about 8.6 million pupils in 2017, which necessitated for a primary school curriculum that would ensure quality, efficient and effective education. These tenets need to be entrenched into a written UPE policy document.
- ii. **Compromised quality of learning outcomes.** There have been serious challenges particularly to the quality of learning outcomes. Reports such as Uwezo Uganda (6th Learning Assessment Report of 2016) revealed dismal performance gains in literacy and numeracy. The same report shows that Ugandan children often perform the worst in comparison with children in Kenya and Tanzania. The achievement of the UPE objectives could be undermined if this trend is left to continue. In relation to completion of the primary cycle which is a component in the UPE policy, the 2016 EMIS report, shows that only 32% of the learners reach P.7 and for children living in the rural areas, the completion rate stands at 33.3% less than for those living in the urban areas.

Conclusions on the Policy, Legal and Institutional Framework Uganda has an elaborate policy, legal and institutional framework for curriculum development and implementation. A number of institutions play a role in the development and implementation of the primary curriculum and many achievements have been realized including the successful review and roll out of a revised primary school curriculum. Equally, the country's curriculum is supported by a variety of policies and legal regimes. However, this review notices critical weaknesses within the institutional arrangement for curriculum development and implementation.

SECTION THREE

3.0 Relevance of the Elements of the Ugandan Primary School Curriculum

This section assesses key elements of the primary school curriculum for relevance and alignment with the national education aims, national development agenda and the UPE objectives. The elements for evaluation include; the curriculum aims or intended outcomes, the subject curriculum, delivery of the curriculum, and the assessment models suggested by the curriculum.

3.1 Evaluation of the aims of the Primary School Curriculum

Generally, the development, implementation and M&E of primary school curriculum is situated within a context of quality universal basic education. This strategic direction is enshrined within the critical policy documents including the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE), the National and International Development Agenda.

The primary school curriculum derives from the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE). The GWPE contains the national aims of education and the sub-sector aims including those of primary education. Accordingly, the competences and skills of the current primary school curriculum are expected to derive from the aims of the primary education sub-sector and the national education aims. Further, the learning areas of the curriculum are expected to result into the desired competences and skills. Above all, these components within the framework are supposed to be aligned to the National and International Development Frameworks that include the long-term National Vision (2040) and National Development Plan(s), and SDGs.

The Vision 2040 paints a picture of education that the country shall be delivering by 2040. In a nutshell, over the vision period, basic education shall continue to be universal and shall focus squarely on skills development based on talent and aptitude identified in a learner. Equally, education shall focus on character formation and appreciation of work ethics through mechanisms such as the national service and apprenticeships/internships. On the other hand, agenda 2030 implores for nations to improve access and quality of education provided.

The national aims of the Ugandan education system are clearly stated in the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) of 1992. These among others emphasize the following:

- (a) To promote understanding and appreciation of the value of national unity, patriotism and cultural heritage, with due consideration to international relations and beneficial interdependence;
- (b) To inculcate moral, ethical and spiritual values in the individual and to develop self-discipline, integrity, tolerance and human fellowship;
- (c) To inculcate into Ugandans a sense of service, duty and leadership for participation in civic, social and national affairs through group activities in educational institutions and the community;

- (d) To promote scientific, technical and cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to enhance individual and national development;
- (e) To eradicate illiteracy and equip the individual with basic skills and knowledge to exploit the environment for self-development as well as national development; for better health, nutrition and family life, and the capacity for continued learning; and,
- (f) To equip the learners with the ability to contribute to the building of an integrated, self-sustaining and independent national economy.

As earlier hinted, the various education sub-sectors derive their aims and objectives from the national aims and objectives. For instance, the primary education sub-sector's aims and objectives are a sub-set of the national aims as seen below:

- (a) To enable individuals to acquire functional, permanent and development literacy, numeracy and communication skills in English, Kiswahili and, at least, one Uganda language;
- (b) To develop and maintain sound mental and physical health among learners;
- (c) To instil the values of living and working cooperatively with other people and caring for others in the community;
- (d) To develop and cherish the cultural, moral and spiritual values of life and appreciate the richness that lies in our varied and diverse cultures and values;
- (e) To promote understanding and appreciation for the protection and utilization of the natural environment, using scientific and technological knowledge and skills;
- (f) To develop an understanding of one's rights and civic responsibilities and duties for the purpose of positive and responsible participation in civic matters;
- (g) To develop a sense of patriotism, nationalism and national unity in diversity;
- (h) To develop pre-requisites for continuing education;
- (i) To acquire a variety of practical skills for enabling one to make a living in a multi skilled manner;
- (j) To develop an appreciation for the dignity of work and for making a living by one's honest effort;
- (k) To equip the child with the knowledge, skills and values of responsible parenthood;
- (l) To develop skills in management of time, finance, as well as respect for private and public property;

- (m) To develop the ability to use the problem-solving approach in various life situations; and,
- (n) To develop discipline and good manners.

With regards to the current primary curriculum, each curriculum cycle has specific aims to be achieved. The lower primary curriculum aims at developing:

- i) Basic literacy, mathematics concepts, and life skills and values, in a first language or familiar language, at a level that will enable the child to mature and be prepared for further learning;
- ii) Sufficient skills in English to act as a basis for developing English as the medium of instruction in the Upper Primary Cycle; and,
- iii) An appreciation of their culture and the roles they can play in the society.

On the other hand, the upper primary school curriculum aims at:

- i) Preparing learners for further learning
- ii) Preparing learners for the world of work
- iii) Preparing learners for the scientific and technical application of knowledge
- iv) Instilling life skills and values in the learners; among others.

Evaluation Findings

The aims of the primary curriculum are comprehensive and address the core national and international education aims. The evaluation findings established that the aims of the primary school curriculum broadly address: universal access to quality education and training; education for further learning, sustainable livelihood and good citizenship; and universalization of literacy, numeracy, and science and technology; which are the focal concerns of the national and international education agendas.

Nonetheless, in as much as there is significant alignment between the primary curriculum aims and the national and international education agendas, the evaluation findings revealed that these aims are not being realized due to gaps in implementation. Poor implementation of the curriculum has been cited in various empirical literature as being a critical barrier to education realizing the preset aims.

1.2. Relevance of the Structure of the Primary School Curriculum

Evaluation Findings

- i) **This evaluation confirms that the curriculum was reviewed in line with the recommendations of the 2005 curriculum mini-review report**
- ii) The 2005 curriculum mini-review report recommended for a structural transformation of the curriculum to make it focus on: i) rapid development of literacy, numeracy and life skills at lower primary; ii) holistic treatment of concepts under themes of immediate meaning and relevance to the learner; and iii) presentation of learning experiences through languages in which the learners were already proficient. Against this understanding, it was envisaged that the revised curriculum would ensure: i) early breakthrough to literacy; ii) mastery of

numeracy skills; iii) empowerment in the use of life skills; iv) provision of a head start to the acquisition of higher order thinking skills and; v) the development of basic language skills for lifelong learning.

- iii) **There are persistent low levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy despite the curriculum review aimed at addressing the same.** Since the launch of the revised curriculum, the evaluation found that learners still exhibit low levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy. Moreover, the low transition rate from primary to secondary schools is another evidence fronted to cast doubt as to whether the new curriculum indeed addressed the identified complexities to literacy and numeracy acquisition and transition to further learning.

The next subsection presents an evaluation of the three curriculum design cycles.

1.2.1. Relevance of the thematic curriculum (cycle 1, P1-P3)

The thematic curriculum was developed around the following principles: i) Use of themes rather than departmentalized subjects; ii) Use of Mother Tongue/Area Language as a Medium of Instruction; iii) The class teacher system; iv) Use of no cost/low cost instruction materials and v) Continuous Assessment.

Evaluation Findings

- i) **Majority (87.3%) of the class teachers rated the use of themes instead of departmentalised subjects, as important for primary one to primary three.** According to the teachers, the content and the thematic organisation of learning materials enables learners have opportunities to learn through more contextualized learning experiences; exposes learners to linkages between school-based, home-based and community-based learning; gives the learners chance to explore a wide range of authentic learning experiences that cannot be provided in the classroom and school; caters for the learners' interests through hands-on experiences in a variety of appealing situations at their age and learning levels; enables the learners un-earth and exploit a greater academic potential for their preparation for both higher education and the world of employment.
- ii) **Use of themes limits the content and concepts for some of the subjects like mathematics.** Teachers who hold this view indicate that some of the mathematical concepts do not readily fall under any of the identified themes. A case in point is the theme on accidents. Although it can be used to teach learning areas like literacy, Fine Art, Music, it is difficult to use it to teach numeracy which involves counting at this level. This observation implies that teachers were not and are not being adequately prepared in terms of training and support to transition and fully implement the thematic curriculum.
- iii) **There are mixed opinions on the relevance of the local language policy.** On the one hand, majority (70%) of teachers interviewed applaud the use of local language for instruction at lower primary. On the other hand, some (30%) are opposed to it.

Some of the reasons given by the teachers who unreservedly oppose the use of local language include inadequate training to teach local languages. It is said that majority of PTCs lack tutors for local languages and therefore there are many PTCs which do not teach local languages to teacher trainees. For those with tutors for local language, the training is very shallow and instruction is still done in English even when the trainees are expected to teach in local language. In other words, at PTCs, local language pedagogy is taught in English and not in the respective language the trainee is to teach. Further, some teachers observe that the fact that all examinations are in English language, there is no compelling case for teaching in local language. It was further observed that the continued use of English as the medium of instruction in majority of the pre-primary schools, makes it even more difficult for primary schools to switch such children to local languages.

- iv) The misconception and poor implementation of the language policy curriculum has created the illusion local language policy is retrogressive to learning of particularly literacy. The focused group discussion of parents indicated that the use of local language as a medium of instruction has very negative consequences towards the achievement of UPE objectives. Some of the reasons given by parents for their opinions about the use of local language include the following:
- a) Since assessment is done in English language, so should instruction;
 - b) Since most of the urban schools had opted out of using local languages, rural schools should as well be allowed to opt out of the arrangement since the rural schools that are emphatically implementing the policy are lagging behind their urban counterparts who are using English language for instruction;
 - c) Instructing children in local languages for three years would make it difficult for them to transition to English within only one year as provided for by the transition curriculum.
- v) From the foregoing arguments by both the parents and teachers, it is clear that the arguments against local language delivery mode are not disputing the positive effect it could play in causing the rapid acquisition of literacy skills. Rather, they seem to arise out of frustrations of poor implementation and poor preparations for roll out of the policy. For instance, in this evaluation, it is found that there are discrepancies with regards to adoption of the policy within schools. Foremost, just like parents observe, the policy is not being applied in private schools and in most of the urban schools in the guise that there is no dominant language in the area where the schools are located.
- vi) The above observations about the use of local language are worrying and could be a threat to the intended objectives of the curriculum, the national education aims and hence the UPE objective on universalization of literacy and numeracy. However, what is clear is that the criticism of local language use mainly emanates from poor implementation and the limited capacity for implementing agencies to deliver the policy.
- vii) **The class teacher system is considered moderately relevant.** The evaluation established that 59% of the class teachers indicated that the system is important for delivering the thematic curriculum. However, 41% of the interviewed class teachers

felt that the class teacher system is impractical and no longer relevant. Teachers argue that the class teacher system compels them to teach eight learning areas per day, moreover in large classes, which is cumbersome, tiring and hence making them ineffective.

- viii) **Use of no cost/low cost instruction materials is still relevant.** Findings indicated that 87% of the interviewed class teachers said that the policy is still relevant on the backdrop that it makes delivery of the thematic curriculum cheaper and sustainable and makes the learning/teaching process relevant given that it involves the use of local materials. However, compared to teachers, it is surprising to note that many head teachers do not believe that the use of low cost materials is still relevant. For instance, 47% think that it is wanting and/or irrelevant.
- ix) **Continuous Assessment as a component of thematic curriculum is rated highly relevant.** Majority of class teachers interviewed supported the use of Continuous Assessment (CA) in the lower primary section with 93% of them saying it is still relevant to the achievement of the national education aims. Teachers who appreciate CA maintain that the results arising from CA enable them to modify their pedagogical strategies to include the construction of remedial activities for pupils who are not achieving at the expected grade level and the creation of enrichment activities for pupils who are working at or above the expected grade level. In this context, the CA process supports a cycle of teacher/pupil self-evaluation and designing of teaching/learning activities by both pupils and teachers.
- x) **In as much as many teachers approve of the CA, its true implementation is still lacking.** At best, teachers construe CA to be constant testing and mutually exclusive from the teaching process. Big class sizes coupled with the class teacher system, which compels them to plan and teach eight learning areas per day, makes the strict application of CA a myth.

1.2.1.1. Conclusions on relevance of the thematic curriculum

Given that international best practice is in favour of the thematic curriculum, and with glaring evidence of its success elsewhere, it would only be logical to concentrate on understanding why the curriculum is not yielding desired results. From our findings, stakeholders' frustrations are associated with the challenges and complexities around the implementation of the thematic curriculum. Secondly, the findings are implicit of the feeling that the preparations involving the conception, development and implementation of the curriculum were inadequate for a smooth rollout. Third, the stakeholders psyche which tends to glorify schools that use English as the language for instruction from pre-primary does not appreciate the thematic curriculum. All these, make some stakeholders to think that the curriculum is irrelevant.

It is recommended that, in order to salvage the situation, the most logical step would be to immediately address the complexities and challenges that reinforce the limited implementation of the thematic curriculum. Foremost, there is need to continuously capacitate schools and teachers to deliver the thematic curriculum. In the immediate term, each school should have a qualified local language teacher, and local language reading materials. Unfortunately, it was reported that very

many local languages do not have developed orthographies and hence written materials are not developed for such languages. Secondly, key stakeholders, particularly the parents should be meaningfully engaged to support the curriculum implementation. Third, teachers need to be specially trained on how to implement the thematic curriculum in its entirety. However, interventions should go beyond mere training and address the classroom environment issues such as the high pupil-teacher ratios, which constrain implementation of particular components of the curriculum such as continuous assessment. In this particular regard, there is need to reverse the class teacher system policy with the intent to improve the pupil-teacher ratios that can facilitate continuous assessment. Further, schools should be encouraged to benchmark success stories from schools where the thematic curriculum has been fully implemented. Also, it is critical to align the language of instruction with the language of assessment to address the current concerns of assessment being purely in English yet instruction is in local language. Above all, if the definition of a national curriculum requires that it must be implemented comprehensively, with certainty, and consistently, then Uganda has no option but to fully enforce the national current without exception, else, no national curriculum exists.

1.2.2. Relevance of the Transition Curriculum (P4 Curriculum)

According to the current design of the primary school curriculum, the P4 curriculum entails transition from thematic to subject based learning. This is marked by a gradual shift from the use of local or area language as a medium of instruction towards the use English Language as a medium of instruction, while retaining the study of local language as a subject. It also entails a shift from the use of non-textbook materials to both textbook and non-textbook materials in preparation for introduction of abstract learning that can enable children' development of higher order creative thinking. Other changes include the transition from shorter lessons (30 minutes) to slightly longer lessons (40 minutes).

Evaluation Findings

- i) **Majority of the teachers (74.3%) appreciated the transition from thematic to subject-based learning and indicated that it is relevant.** Those that hold a positive view of the transition curriculum emphasise that the P.4 curriculum is critical to bridge lower primary curriculum and the upper primary curriculum. Further, majority of the teachers feel that by focusing on language skills and the relevant subjects makes the P.4 curriculum even more relevant to the national aims, particularly those that relate to the universalisation of the literacy. Also, the P.4 curriculum provides for a smoothed transition in such a way that it approaches learning from known to unknown. This practice tends to make learning interesting and may lead to retention of children in school, which is one of the critical aims of education.
- ii) **Transition from local language to English and from thematic to subject-based curriculum within one year is unrealistic.** Some teachers (26.7%), who hold negative outlook of the P.4 curriculum argue that it is utterly unrealistic to expect full transfer from local language to English to take place within only one year. This would then justify a significant reduction of subject content for P.4 in order to focus on the smooth transition and language skills. In addition, teachers observed that there is a very wide gap between teacher training and the demands of the transition class. In fact, it was made clear that there is no special training within PTCs for teaching transition classes, yet, the class requires special

skills to transition from thematic to subject based curriculum. Secondly, teachers decried the lack of guidelines to implementing and management of the transition curriculum. Besides, teachers rated lack of relevant instructional materials specifically for the transition class as the number one barrier to the effective implementation of the P.4 curriculum.

- iii) **There is lack of pedagogical expertise amongst most of the teachers of the transition classes.** The general practice on ground is that any teacher can be assigned to teach the transition class and most of these teachers conceded to being clueless on how to effectively manage transition from the thematic to upper primary. This is attributed to the lack of specialized teacher training for teachers expected to specifically implement the transition curriculum. This is further compounded by the general lack of clinical guidance on the implementation of the transition curriculum. Besides, poor classroom environment punctuated by general lack of specially designed learning/teaching materials has affected implementation of the transition curriculum.

1.2.2.1. Conclusions on relevance of the Transition (P4) curriculum

It is clear that the P4 curriculum is critical as it is the bridge between the thematic and the upper primary curriculum. Teachers also observe that it is well sequenced from known content to unknown. This is a critical attribute of the curriculum given that it breeds interest in the children to love school.

In conclusion, the transition curriculum is regarded as critical and very relevant to the national education aims particularly given that it focuses on language skills and ensures progression and transition to upper classes. However, drawing from best international practices, education systems are moving towards whole integrated thematic curricular throughout their basic education sub-sectors, that is, primary and lower secondary. This is food for thought for Uganda, particularly given that the lower secondary curriculum is as well arranged around thematic learning areas. This necessitates that the whole primary curriculum should be thematic but with differentiated themes aligned to the cognitive, life skills and values that are intended for particular grades.

This evaluation acknowledges peculiar challenges that lie with transition curriculum implementation. It is clear that there is inadequate support and capacity for most of the schools and teachers to deliver the transition curriculum in its ideal form. It is therefore recommended that schools should be capacitated with learning/teaching materials that are carefully designed to facilitate transition. Equally, the transition curriculum should be mainstreamed within the teacher training curriculum to provide for the peculiar professional needs of P4 teachers. In the interim, there is need for interventions to fast-track the capacity of the existing P4 teachers to deliver the transition curriculum. with regards to the short time within which for transition to occur, there are two options recommended by teachers. Either, the P4 curriculum content should be significantly scaled down to optimize on language skills and numeracy, or preparation for transition needs to begin somewhere in P3. Unfortunately, this study did not go ahead to evaluate these options.

1.2.3. Upper Primary Curriculum Cycle (P5-7)

- i) **Majority (80.9%) of the class teachers interviewed regard the upper primary cycle as relevant to the attainment of the national education goals.** This is, among others, based on the fact that it aims at preparing learners for secondary education, world of work, and the

scientific application of knowledge. Moreover, this cycle emphasizes the development of life skills and values including: effective communication, friendship formation, assertiveness, critical thinking, interpersonal relationships, non-violent conflict resolution, interpersonal relationship and decision making while the values include appreciation respect, love, cooperation, obedience, honesty and responsibility. All these significantly match with the national and international education agenda aims.

- ii) **Non-incentive to teach non-examinable subjects.** In as much as teachers maintain that the subjects for upper curriculum are all relevant, this evaluation found that only the examinable subjects are taught. This implies that there is no incentive to teach the non-examinable subjects in the category of Creative Arts, and Physical Education (CAPE), yet according to the recommendations of the teachers, majority indicated the need to emphasise vocation-based studies at upper primary. This again points at poor implementation of the curriculum where just a part of it is taught. It is therefore critical to explore for creative and comprehensive assessment models that provide for assessment of the entire curriculum.
- iii) The subject-based upper primary curriculum is a disconnection from the lower primary thematic curriculum and the lower secondary curriculum, all of which are organised around themes/broader learning areas.

1.2.3.1. Conclusions on Relevance of the Upper Primary (P5-P7) Curriculum

Whereas the class teachers generally believe that the upper primary curriculum is still relevant, they only teach the examinable subjects. This has constrained the acquisition of particularly the non-cognitive skills required for the world of work, hence contradicting the national education goals that require all knowledge domains to be taught and assessed. In addition, there is a fundamental flaw that need to be addressed in the design of the upper primary curriculum to get it aligned to the lower secondary curriculum that is organised, not along subjects, but rather around broader learning areas. Going forward, given that the lower secondary education has been revised based on the integration philosophy (around broader learning areas), it would necessitate the whole primary curriculum to be thematic for coherence and alignment of the two curricular.

1.3. Adequacy and Relevancy of Primary Curriculum Content/Subject Matter (Syllabus)

1.3.1.1. The Rationale of Primary School Curriculum Content

Effort was made to write the rationale for the content of the entire curriculum for each class, each subject, and strands in the thematic curriculum. The way the rationale was written helps teachers to understand what changes were made in some areas and the significance of the subjects and strands and the content therein.

The rationale for every subject, learning area or strand is sufficient to enable the teacher understand why the curriculum and subject syllabus has been structured or organized the way it is. For example, the shift from objective-based to competence-based curriculum has been clearly explained in each of the thematic curriculum (P1-P3) classes' curriculum documents and the reasons for this given. Nonetheless, the only gap here is that the change from objectives to competencies was never

explained in the transition and upper primary classes' curricular. Perhaps this was on the assumption that teachers may have access to all curriculum documents in the school. Unfortunately, since each class has a separate curriculum designed at a specific time, there was need to ensure that this big change is explained to every teacher in every class.

1.3.2. Relevance of the Primary School Curriculum content and its expected outcomes

The content of the Uganda Primary School Curriculum is structured in line with its cyclic design. As earlier on observed, the design and content of the current primary school curriculum were mainly informed by the 2005 Mini White Paper on the Uganda Primary Curriculum Review (NCDC, 2012). This document recommended, among other things, the reduction of curriculum content and unnecessary overlaps within and across subjects; presentation of curriculum content relevant to the level of learners in various classes; and the enhancement of literacy and English and numeracy. It is acknowledged that the greatest changes in the curriculum happened in the thematic curriculum and that content changes in the upper primary curriculum are minimal, mainly limited to inclusion of a few topics.

The lower primary curriculum content is structured around themes as follows:

P1: Our school, Our home, our community, the human body and health, Weather, Accidents and safety, Living Together, Food and Nutrition, Transport, Things we make in our environment, Peace and Security.

P2: Our school and neighborhood, Our home and community, The human body and health, Food and nutrition, Our Environment, Things we Make, Transport in our community, Accidents and safety, Peace and Security, Child protection, Measures, Recreation, Festivals and holidays.

P3: Our sub county/ division, livelihood in our sub county/division, environment and weather in our sub county/Division, living things: plants in our sub county, in our sub county, living things: animals in our sub county/ Division, managing our resource in our sub county/Division, keeping peace in our sub county, culture and gender in our sub county, health in our sub county, Basic technology in our sub county/Division, Energy in our sub county/Division.

Besides the above themes, pupils in lower primary school study Physical Education (PE), and Religious Education (RE).

There is a hierarchy of results expected from the content of each cycle. To this end, each curriculum cycle has aims, learning outcomes, and competences. It is envisaged that at the end of the lower primary education cycle, pupils should be able to:

- (i) Demonstrate a wide variety of indigenous Uganda traditional games and develop interest in play activities that perpetuate cultural heritage;
- (ii) Demonstrate improved physical qualities in various games, apply rules, show positive attitude, organize and enjoy games;
- (iii) Perform basic motor skills of movement involving the whole body and manipulative skills; and

- (iv) Show ability to organize, lead and enjoy a variety of games played according to well-observed rules.

UNESCO has developed criterion to evaluate the quality of curriculum content and this is partly used to evaluate the extent to which the thematic curriculum content is relevant. To illustrate, UNESCO implores curriculum developers to ensure that curriculum content fulfils the following conditions at the minimum:

- i) Content should be presented as a linked body rather than as discrete subjects in order to promote integrated learning;
- ii) content should be balanced, that is, integrating the three domains of Knowledge-Cognitive, Psychomotor and Affective domains;
- iii) Focus should be on competence building;
- iv) content should encourage teachers to look beyond textbooks
- v) content should be linked to aspects of learners and society interest
- vi) curriculum content should encourage cross-cutting themes and issues
- vii) relevant content should be suitably demanding, extend children's capabilities, promote higher order thinking, and stimulate curiosity.

Evaluation Findings

- i) **The content of the Ugandan thematic primary curriculum to a greater extent fulfils the UNESCO criteria for quality curriculum content.** Foremost, the content is arranged in themes and it integrates cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of knowledge. Also, the curriculum shifted from an objective-based curriculum to competence-based curriculum as reflected by the hierarchy of results of the curriculum. Further, the themes including “our home”, “Our Community”, “My body” “Accidents and Safety”, among others are linked to the interests of the learners and society.
- ii) **There is a wide gap between the stated learning outcomes and the actual outcomes arising out of the curriculum content.** It is critical to note that, in as much as the written thematic curriculum content satisfies the international best practices, the evaluation indicated that lower primary learners still exhibit low proficiencies in literacy and numeracy. On the other hand, whereas one of the major outcomes of the thematic curriculum is the development of motor and manipulative skills, the evaluation indicated that schools are more obsessed with teaching the examinable learning areas at the expense of the non-examinable like Physical Education (PE). To illustrate this, PE is allocated the least amount of time on the time table with schools on average allocating it at most 2 hours per week. In some instances, teachers reported that even the 2 hours are not utilised for purposes of PE, rather they are just for formality. This therefore suggests that the discrepancies between the outcomes of the written curriculum and the actually implemented curriculum are partly because of the poor implementation of the written curriculum. *“Children are being taught to memorise content for examination purposes rather than competence building”* one teacher observed.
- iii) **The content of upper primary in all subject is relevant and related to the pupils and society's interest.** Teachers rated all subjects for upper primary as relevant with each

subject's relevance rating above 90%. However, teachers observed that there is need to emphasise CAPEs given that they are more practical. Unfortunately, all teachers doubted the possibility of schools emphasising CAPEs yet they are not examined. . To this end, it was recommended that all subjects be examinable, on the backdrop that this would force teachers to teach it.

- iv) **There are mixed opinions with regards to adequacy of time to complete the subject contents for upper primary.** Whereas majority of class teachers (60.7%) indicated that time available is adequate to complete the content of the upper primary curriculum, a relatively big proportion (39.3%) complained of too much content in the subjects yet time is limited to teach it, hence making teachers to rush the teaching without minding of improving competences of the learners. Accordingly, they recommended for a reduction in subject content for upper primary. However, these observations contradict the position of the curriculum developers who indicated that such an aspect was addressed in the revised curriculum given that it was identified as an issue in the 2005 mini curriculum review. Perhaps the content reduction was not substantial. To back up this view, some teachers claim that it is because of the “stuff” subject content that they are forced to teach beyond the gazetted school time, a practice that has been condemned by the general public and the MoES. In fact, the Assistant Commissioner for Basic Education at the MoES disagreed with the assertion that the subject content was too much. He said that the curriculum was well designed and balanced in all respects. According to him the content is just sufficient. He however noted that teachers tend to waste a lot of teaching time due to rampant absenteeism which makes them not finish the syllabus, hence the illusion that the curriculum content is bulky, yet it is not. The differences in opinions across the different stakeholders with regards to relevance of curriculum content signifies the complexities that surround curriculum development. Stakeholders hold very divergent views which cannot easily converge given that each has a basis. This therefore amplifies the importance of extensive and intensive stakeholder engagement throughout the value chain for curriculum development.
- v) **While these outcomes are rated relevant by Teachers, there is evidence to suggest that such outcomes are not being realised at the end of the Upper Primary Curriculum;** For instance, 69% of the learners are likely to progress from P7 to S1, and transition significantly slows further at S4 where only 29% are likely to progress to “A” level. Further, evidence suggests that there are no deliberate efforts by schools to prepare upper primary pupils for the world of work as an outcome. Schools are obsessed with drilling children to pass the exams. While there is nothing wrong with enabling children to pass exams, this is happening at the expense of learning areas such as CAPEs, and PE which have direct bearings on skills development for the world of work. This again takes us back to the issue of implementation rather than the curriculum content.

1.4. Cross-Cutting Issues and Content Integration and Sequencing as measures of curriculum relevance

It is indicated that quality and relevant curriculum should as well address cross-cutting issues and ensure the logical sequencing and integration of curriculum content. In what follows, we evaluate the Ugandan primary school curriculum against these parameters.

1.4.1. Cross-cutting issues

The extent to which the curriculum content embeds the cross-cutting themes and issues is a critical relevance criterion. This is of paramount importance particularly for Uganda today where a number of cross-cutting issues continue to affect the ability of certain subgroups of the population not only to attend education but also to cope with the presence of threats to their well-being. To this end, a relevant curriculum content must embed issues related to gender, geographical disparities, HIV and AIDS, lack of information and environmental conditions which complicate and challenge child survival, education provision and protection. The inclusion of cross-cutting issues in the curriculum is as well aligned to SDG requirements.

Evaluation findings

- i) **Cross-cutting issues are integrated in the primary school curriculum.** Our analysis found that all the key cross-cutting issues are imbedded within the primary school curriculum. To illustrate, with reference to the thematic curriculum content, theme 9 is dedicated to culture and gender; theme 7 is dedicated to managing our resources; theme 3 is dedicated to our environment while theme 10 is dedicated to Our Health where HIV AIDS is discussed. Similarly, the upper primary curriculum content covers the key cross-cutting issues just as highlighted in the thematic curriculum. Specifically, the curriculum content addresses key issues including; HIV/AIDS, Child Labour, Human rights, children's responsibilities, peace education, SNE, life skills, child-to-child and media. Recently, the sexuality education framework was launched by the MoES to, as part of the curriculum content, address aspects of sexual and reproductive health issue within primary and post-primary levels.
- ii) **Whilst the curriculum content is found to be inclusive, there are inadequate SNE teachers implement it.** There is evidence of the different formats of the curricular to cater for students with special learning needs, there is acute scarcity of teachers for special needs with the special skills to deliver content to SNE pupils. This evaluation found that 23% of the primary schools visited did not have any special needs teacher while 62% reported to have between 1-2 SNE teachers.

1.4.2. Content Sequencing

According to UNESCO, quality curriculum content should be organised in a progressive sequence aligned to children's development, cognitive and emotional growth with the intent to ensure continuity and mastery of subject content. Curriculum developers in Uganda mainly used the **spiralling** strategy to ensure content sequencing.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation found that there were deliberate efforts to thread the content of the curriculum from primary one to primary seven in an ascending order of difficulty with a continuous re-introduction of the important ideas from a lower level in an improved form at a higher level to enhance a systematic presentation, mastery and consolidation. By using **spiralling strategy**, the curriculum content of the primary curriculum has been progressively structured from primary one to primary seven in an ascending order of difficulty. According to the information from the TIET department,

“The curriculum is well articulated and caters for progression of concepts”. This satisfies the philosophy of teaching from “simple to complex” and “known to unknown”. This is the proper spiralling of a curriculum like the primary school one which has ascending class and cycle levels that have to be structured to reflect these philosophies.

The designers of the primary school curriculum ably structured content in an incremental manner as illustrated below: Primary one has twelve themes which begin with “Our School” and end with “Peace and Security”. Even Peace and Security is systematically organized to cover:

- *Peace and security in our home*
- *Peace and security in our school and*
- *Peace and security in our community*

(NCDC 2006, P.v)

This is spiralling within a class. The learner increases levels of abstraction as s/he pushes through the year from the first term to the third term. This approach cuts across all classes.

1.4.3. Content Integration

Evaluation Findings

There is evidence to conclude that the thematic curriculum is highly and deliberately integrated. Similarly, there is also deliberate integration in the transition and upper primary classes (P4-7). For instance, language competencies have been prioritised and mainstreamed into all the syllabi of the different subjects. There is also integration of content of other subjects to be taught as English Language vocabulary or content. This is very important because all subjects are learnt using English Language in the transition class up to primary seven. Further integration is reflected in the fusion of science into English language stories.

1.5. Conclusions on Adequacy and Relevancy of the Primary Curriculum Content

From the findings, stakeholders hold divergent views with regards to adequacy and relevancy of primary school curriculum content. On the one hand, respondents make it clear that the content contained in both the thematic curriculum and the upper primary curriculum is to a great extent adequate and relevant. This is based on the evidence that the content integrates the three domains of knowledge (ie the cognitive, psychomotor and affective); the themes such as “our home”, “Our Community”, “My body” “Accidents and Safety” are linked to the interests of the learners and society. On the other hand, some teachers argue that the content is irrelevant given that it has failed to achieve the stated learning outcomes of the curriculum. This claim is backed up by reports that continue to indicate that lower primary learners still exhibit low proficiencies in literacy and numeracy. Relatedly, whereas one of the major outcomes of the thematic curriculum is the development of motor and manipulative skills, reports indicate that schools are more obsessed with teaching the examinable learning areas at the expense of the non-examinable ones like physical education, music, crafts, arts etc. A similar accusation is labelled against the upper primary curriculum that whereas the content is adequate and relevant, there is evidence to suggest that such content has not translated into the stated learning outcomes. This is evidenced by low transition rates, and lack of deliberate efforts by schools to prepare upper primary pupils for the world of work

as one of the other key curriculum outcomes. Rather, schools are obsessed with drilling children to pass the exam at the expense of learning areas such as CAPEs, and PE which have direct bearings on skills development for the world of work.

With regards to the other dimensions of relevant curriculum content including integration, sequencing and inclusiveness, there is evidence to suggest that there have been deliberate efforts to optimise the integration and sequencing of thematic and subject content. To illustrate, deliberate effort was made to thread the content of the curriculum from primary one to primary seven in an ascending order of difficulty with a continuous re-introduction of the important ideas from a lower level in an improved form at a higher level to enhance a systematic presentation, mastery and consolidation. At the same time, curriculum developers carefully used the spiralling strategy to ensure appropriate content sequencing.

With regards to relevance in terms of the content's ability to address the cross-cutting issues, this evaluation found that the content addresses the issues but implementation has been a problem. For instance, there is acute lack of special needs education resources such as teachers and materials within the primary schools to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive.

To conclude, on paper, the content of the Ugandan primary curriculum is to a greater extent relevant and adequate in accordance with the learners' interests and those of the nation, but the way it is delivered makes it irrelevant. For instance, it is clear that teachers continue to present content in form of discrete subjects, the content taught is not balanced with emphasis being on only the cognitive domain, and content delivered does not extend and promote higher order thinking. This therefore necessitates stronger control mechanisms probably through meaningful inspection to ensure that content is delivered as intended. Additionally, there is need to enhance PTCs' capacities to train teachers who are able to deliver the primary school curriculum content. Besides, there is need to align the teacher training curriculum with the primary school curriculum content so as to ensure that the teacher is very familiar with the primary content right from the training college.

SECTION FOUR

4.0. Curriculum Implementation

Besides prescribing what should be learnt, quality curricular highlights on how it should be taught and assessed. This is done by clearly stating the expectations of the different stakeholders including students, teachers, school management, parents, employers and government agencies among others. This therefore implies that curriculum implementation is a multi-stakeholder job, although it is always narrowed down to teachers and the school. Curriculum implementation simply means putting the written curriculum into practice.

According to UNESCO, **pupils** are expected to be active contributors to the teaching, learning and assessment practices. Further, during implementation, **pupils** must be curious and be willing to ask questions, learn content and the associated skills. On the other hand, **teachers** are expected to interpret curriculum and derive teaching materials accordingly, plan for teaching, plan for assessment of teaching and use it not only to test how well content and skills have been learned but also to understand the strengths and weaknesses of individual learners to improve future instruction. The **school** is expected to facilitate the curriculum delivery by ensuring a supportive teaching and learning environment, support teachers in adopting innovative teaching practice and nurture the spirit of team teaching in curriculum delivery. Also, schools are expected to provide CPD to improve teachers practice. On the other hand, **education authorities** including **Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)** are expected to support teachers and schools in being innovative and creative in understanding and implementation of the curriculum. In addition, education authorities are required to provide incentives and promotion scheme that enable curriculum implementation. Further, education authorities are expected to ensure that the national examinations reflect the national curriculum being implemented. Also, education authorities are expected to communicate time allocations sufficient to achieve meaningful learning outcomes. Above all, education authorities are required to provide the resources and equipment necessary to implement the curriculum successfully.

It is clear that the curriculum is implemented through effective teaching/learning and effective support for the teaching and learning to happen. Effective teaching ideally involves curriculum interpretation, translation of the curriculum into teaching/learning activities and assessment of the teaching/learning activities. In the next paragraphs, this evaluation shall be assessing the state of the highlighted components of curriculum implementation.

4.1. Teachers' Effective Interpretation of the Curriculum

The competences expected of a Ugandan Primary School teacher as highlighted in the Primary Teacher's Profile include the expectation to be knowledgeable about the primary school curriculum content. During training, teachers are prepared to interpret the curriculum, plan lessons, select and use appropriate instructional materials, teach the planned lessons and during delivery use the available time effectively as they help learners to understand what they are teaching. Ability to interpret the curriculum is critical given that teachers cannot teach what they don't know and understand.

Evaluation Findings

- i) **Teachers' ability to interpret the primary school curriculum is compromised by an examination-oriented education system.** The evaluation found that 83% of teachers interviewed said that they were adequately prepared to interpret and implement the curriculum. However, 68% of the District Inspectors of School (DIS) interviewed noted that primary school teachers are able to interpret the curriculum as expected. The DIS argue that currently, the teachers' understanding of the primary school curriculum is judged by the number of students that pass his/her subject highly. This practice is perpetuated by an overly examination results-oriented education system that conditions stakeholders think that quality teaching and learning must always lead to passing highly the narrowly focused national examinations. To this end, the teachers rarely attempt to interpret the curriculum. Rather, the practice is for them to interpret the past national examination papers that mostly guide their teaching. This therefore implies that whereas some teachers genuinely lack the competences to correctly interpret the primary school curriculum, which is an indictment on our primary teacher training and support system, for those that have the competences to do so are constrained by the examination results-oriented system that forces them to rely on national examination past-papers to inform their teaching. This is the greatest tragedy of our education system, where content taught is based on the past and the speculated national examination questions. Yet, even the national examinations that inform interpretation of what is taught only address the cognitive domain of the knowledge.

4.2. Planning for Teaching

Planning for teaching is acknowledged to be one of the most critical stages towards curriculum implementation. This is on the backdrop that planning allows the teacher to, before teaching, identify appropriate content for teaching, highlight the key competences that learners are to develop arising out of the content to be taught, and the appropriate methods of teaching aligned to the different learner abilities and assessment items. Besides, planning enables the teacher to, in time, identify and prepare appropriate instruction materials to be used in the lesson. It is for this rationale that the teachers code of conduct requires teachers to adequately plan for all their lessons. Also, the primary teachers' competence profile expects all teachers to plan for all their lessons before teaching.

Evaluation Finding

There are low levels of planning for teaching in primary schools. This evaluation revealed that only 43% of the teachers interviewed planned all their timetabled lessons. This implies that majority of primary school teachers teach without planning their lessons, a practice that is against policy. This finding is corroborated by responses from the District Inspectors of Schools (DIS) who affirmed that majority of the teachers do not plan for their lessons and that some that do, are mostly fulfilling a routine, with limited regard to quality of the plan. To illustrate, the results further indicate that overall, close to 60% of the teachers who plan for lessons had their lesson plans

reflecting all the key quality lesson plan indicators³ while 40% planned for the sake of it without any due regard to the qualities of a lesson plan. It is however clear that quality lesson planning is happening at lower primary levels compared to upper primary.

Some of the major reasons given by teachers for inadequate planning of lessons and non-compliance of lesson plans to the key quality indicators are: i) Same content being taught, therefore no need to plan again; ii) Too much work load/activities; iii) Inadequate time; iv) Laxity of teachers; v) Challenges associated with the Class Teacher System; vi) Inadequate instructional materials to use in planning lessons; vii) High pupil teacher ratio; viii) Unethical conduct/ lack of professionalism; ix) Late delivery of materials for lesson planning by the Ministry of Education; x) Non-examinable subjects need not be planned for; xi) Some teachers are not trained and hence find difficulty to plan lessons; and xii) Inadequate supervision of teaching by school administration.

4.3. Lesson Delivery

4.3.1. Use of appropriate methodology to deliver lessons

Evaluation Findings

- i) **The methodology guidelines for the thematic curriculum are more comprehensive than those for transition and the upper primary classes.** In curriculum design, guidelines on methodology for teaching have been integrated in the whole curriculum from P1-3 (thematic classes cycle), P4 (Transition class cycle) and P5-7 (Upper primary classes cycle). These guidelines differ from cycle to cycle. It is however clear that the methodology guidelines for the thematic curriculum are more comprehensive than those for transition and the upper primary classes. It is also apparent that the extra effort put on comprehensive methodology guidelines for the thematic curriculum facilitates employment of learner centred teaching. Learner centred teaching for the thematic curriculum was also complemented by choosing themes and pedagogical approaches that are closely related to children's interests, experiences and background. However, this was not spiralled into the transition (P.4) class and upper primary (P5-7) classes. Yet, the teachers felt that the transition class was too demanding and that the teachers should have been given more refresher courses to manage its instruction effectively. This is an indication that teachers of the transition class still find it a problem to effectively teach.
- ii) **The scanty methodology guidelines in the transition and upper primary classes could be explained by limited funding.** To illustrate, the development of the thematic curriculum was funded by FENU while the development of upper primary classes was funded by funds from the Government of Uganda. As reported by NCDC, FENU declined to fund the process of developing the upper primary classes' curriculum because they had wanted it to also be thematic but the Government of Uganda did not agree to this. The Government of Uganda

³These include whether: the learning outcomes are stated in behavioural terms and are achievable; subject matter objectives are clearly stated; methods are clearly identified; Language Development objectives are clearly stated; lesson procedure is well elaborated; instructional materials are identified; appropriate time is allocated to lesson phases; and whether life skills and values to be developed are identified and clearly categorized.

had to therefore fund the process of developing the upper primary classes' curriculum. The funding from the government did not match the FENU funding in that the FENU funding for lower and transition classes was sufficient while that of the government did not seem to be sufficient.

- iii) **The inadequate guidance on delivery methodology for the transition and upper primary classes remains a barrier to the effective delivery of particularly the primary school curriculum.** This is because, the curriculum has to provide the teachers with the design of how to teach in order to enable the teachers to undertake quality planning, teaching and evaluation. This would minimise the discrepancies in the ways teachers interpret pedagogy for delivering the curriculum and as well as ease the significant burden on the newly and inexperienced teachers to devise more appropriate pedagogy to deliver the curriculum. Moreover, the divergent resource bases and learning environments tend to compound the burden on such teachers if the curriculum is not explicit on pedagogy. Therefore, there is clear need for a comprehensive and articulate guidance of the teacher on how to plan, the relevant methods to employ in the teaching learning process, how to employ such methods, what resources are needed and how to use these resources to deliver the curriculum.

4.3.2. Teaching methods

Evaluation Findings

- (i) **Whilst primary school teachers use a mix of methods to deliver lessons, they use more of the teacher centred method.** This evaluation was concerned with the extent to which teachers understand and apply appropriate approaches to teaching and assessment of learning. Particularly, the evaluation was interested in establishing the extent to which teachers: i) Use child centred methods of instruction; ii) Give learners chance to spend time on curriculum related tasks; and iii) Use appropriate learning aids; and appropriately assess learners. It was found that school teachers use a mix of methods to deliver lessons. Those that were most cited in the survey include: i) Chalk and talk; ii) Visual Arts; iii) Reading; iv) Demonstrations/Role Play; v) Group Work; vi) Experimental Work; vii) Peer Teaching; and viii) Question and Answer.

From the above methods, it is clear that teachers employ both learner centred and teacher centred methods to deliver lessons. From the pedagogy guidelines by the NCDC, learner centred teaching methods are recommended as opposed to teacher centred. This is on the backdrop that learner centred methods are well aligned to the current primary school curriculum which emphasises learner activities rather than teacher activities, during the delivery of the lessons. In light of this, in as much as the list of methods contains more learner centred methods, teachers were seen to be more inclined to using chalk and talk method, which is a predominantly teacher centred method, which entails a teacher writing on the chalkboard while the students copy and memorise it. It is indeed worrying to note that very few teachers (less than 15%) reported to be using pupil centred methods such as group work method, experimental method, demonstrations and roleplays, personalized learning, and differentiated instruction, among others.

This is an indication that teachers still find it a challenge to implement the curriculum guidelines on lesson delivery. Some of the reasons given for non-compliance include: i) Large class sizes where there are too many learners under one teacher (high pupil teacher ratios); ii) Inadequate capacity of the teachers to apply some of the predominantly learner centred methods in their teaching; iii) Inadequate teaching learning environment which does not support learner centered methods of instruction; and iv) Teaching/Learning process being examination driven.

- ii) **It was acknowledged that the examination results-oriented approach to teaching that has proliferated the education system is an obstacle to genuinely employ learner centered methods of teaching.** Rather, it was observed that teachers are under pressure to use such teaching methods that would enable them complete the examinable syllabuses in disregard of the guidelines contained in the curriculum. According to the District Inspectors of Schools (DIS), such methods that are used to quickly cover the curriculum are not at all learner centred nor curriculum centred but are rather examination centred. Bearing in mind the examinations are restricted to testing the cognitive domain, it means that the non-examinable subjects within the curriculum like CAPE and PE receive what Muyanda-Mutebi (1996) refers to as scanty attention.

From the above discussion, there is evidence to conclude that the methods commonly used by teachers are not linked to the curriculum given that they are mainly teacher centred and examination centred methods, and this contradicts the curriculum pedagogy guidelines that emphasize the use of learner centred methods in delivering the whole primary school curriculum. This means that the curriculum is not being implemented as guided by the curriculum developers (NCDC).

4.3.3. The Extent to which Lessons are Focused on the Curriculum

Evaluation Finding

Majority (87%) of the teachers provide chance to their learners to spend time on curriculum related tasks. Given that the curriculum is majorly implemented through lessons, the extent to which lessons are focused on curriculum related tasks, to a greater extent determines the level of curriculum implementation. In this evaluation, teachers were asked about the extent to which they give chance to pupils to spend time on curriculum related tasks. The findings indicate that majority (87%) of the teachers agreed to the practice of creating opportunities for pupils to engage on curriculum related tasks. Nonetheless, the evaluation obtained lower rating from the District Inspectors of Schools (DIS) on this aspect. To illustrate, 68% of the DIS interviewed believe that teachers provide an opportunity for pupils to engage on curriculum related tasks. The evaluation found a strong correlation between the act of focusing the lessons on the curriculum and level of teachers' mastery of the curriculum content. This then implies that teachers who have full authority and mastery of the primary school curriculum content are more likely to provide an opportunity for learners to engage on curriculum related tasks.

4.3.4. Use of Teaching/Learning Aids in Delivery of Lessons

The case for the need to use teaching/learning aids in delivering a lesson has been made in a plethora of literature. A lot of evidence is available that associates the use of teaching aids to

teaching effectiveness and hence learner performance. This realisation has been entrenched within Uganda's laws. For instance, the Education Act (2008) indicates that the Ministry of Education and Sports through its agencies shall ensure the provision of learning and instructional materials. Available policies require the teacher to use appropriate teaching aids to improve learning experiences of the pupils. One of such policies is the one that requires teachers to put textbooks in learners' hands and the policy on use of local low cost/no cost materials in lower primary school. In this evaluation, we are interested in establishing the extent to which teachers use teaching aids to deliver lessons, as part of curriculum implementation. However, before assessing usage of teaching aids, it is critical to first establish whether teachers have access to the teaching aids.

Evaluation findings

- i) **Majority of the teachers work in a constrained environment where chalk is the only instruction material they are assured of on a daily basis.** Majority of the teachers (87%) indicated that they do have access to chalk whenever they are teaching. However, very few teachers have access to lesson planning books (22%), teachers' guides (22%), dusters (30%), geometry rulers (25%), geometry instruments (27%), dictionary (34%), wall map (12%), pens (27%), and manila papers (29%) (see Table 2). From the table 2 above, it is clear that majority of the teachers work in a constrained environment where chalk is the only instruction material they are assured of on a daily basis. Of critical concern is the lack of lesson planning books and teachers' guides which could explain the low lesson planning levels found by this evaluation.

Table 4. 1: Teachers response on the instruction materials they have access to during teaching

Instruction Material	Access (Daily or During Teaching)
Chalk	87%
Lesson Planning Books	22%
Teachers Guides	22%
Dusters	30%
Geometry Rulers	25%
Geometry Instruments	27%
Dictionary	34%
Wall Map	12%
Pens	27%
Manila Papers	29%

Source: NPA survey 2017

- i) **With regards to usage of instructional materials, 52% of the teachers indicated that they use textbooks in classroom teaching.** Most of the teachers (76%) who use textbooks mainly use them to give work to pupils, while fewer teachers (20%) give learners textbooks for self-use.
- ii) **There has been noticed improvement in pupil textbook ratio from about 7:1 (2001) to about 3:1 (2017) mainly due to the liberalization of the textbook publishing and distribution significantly lowered the unit cost of textbook by approximately 66% (two thirds).** The evaluation found that breaking government monopoly to some extent improved on the general efficiency in the development and distribution of textbooks. This

development is critical given the irrefutable evidence that textbooks significantly improve quality of learning outcomes and curriculum implementation particularly in poor communities where teachers have little training, classes are large, large percentages of parents are illiterate and households lack reading materials. Nonetheless, the cost of textbooks in Uganda are still higher compared to her Sub-Saharan peers due to among others corruption within the procurement and diversity in languages of instruction. At national level, the greatest cost driver for textbook budget is the short text-book life due to poor storage and handling.

- iii) **Majority of teachers display teaching aids in the classrooms.** With regards to the requirement to display teaching aids in the classroom, 88% of the teachers indicate that they display teaching aids in their classrooms. When observed, the displayed charts had exercises in form of questions for children to enhance the children's incidental learning during their free time. Some of the reasons given for the non-display include: i) Teachers' failure to make the instructional materials for display; ii) Classrooms with no windows and doors and therefore teachers cannot display anything even if they have made what could be displayed. In such a situation, the materials could be stolen if displayed; iii) Classrooms being under trees in the school compound where there are no walls for display; iv) Incomplete classroom blocks with rough walls where materials could not be displayed; v) Temporary rooms like make shift classrooms where display is hard and wasteful; and vi) Lack of resources to make the learning aids.

4.4. Assessment of Pupils Learning

Assessment is intended to appraise teaching and learning processes to establish whether the two processes are leading to the attainment of the stated curriculum outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and value dispositions. Most importantly, assessment is expected to help improve the teaching and learning processes. The curriculum for each class gives guidelines on how assessment of learning is expected to be undertaken. According to the primary school curriculum, assessment is supposed to focus on tracking learners progress on the learning outcomes as stated in the curriculum. This implies that assessment must be aligned to the curriculum outcomes. Continuous assessment has been emphasised by the primary school curriculum as the preferred approach to assessment. This approach to assessment integrates the assessment tasks or exercises or activities within the teaching and learning processes rather than being concentrated at the end. In other words, CA is part of the teaching and learning cycle.

This evaluation examined the current primary school assessment practices in light of their relevance and adequacy towards the attainment of the primary school curriculum goals, and the national education goals. Specifically, the assessment practices are assessed for their alignment to the curriculum and impact on teaching and learning processes.

On paper, the assessment approach suggested by the curriculum is validly aligned to the curriculum. To illustrate, the curriculum implores curriculum implementers to use Continuous Assessment (CA) with the intent to improve the teaching and learning processes to achieve the expected learning outcomes. This is aligned with the current curriculum design that integrated each learning activity with corresponding assessment activities, hence treating teaching/ learning and assessment as mutually inclusive.

4.4.1 Assessments that are undertaken in primary schools

The primary schools visited reported two levels of assessment, that is, national level assessments and the classroom-based assessments. At the national level, there are two assessments that are being undertaken, that is, the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) and the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE), all administered by UNEB. On the other hand, schools reported that they administer teacher set tests, commercial tests, and teacher selected assessment activities such as assignments.

Evaluation Findings

- i) **Assessment practices in the primary schools significantly differ from those contained in the written curriculum.** The evaluation found that in practice, the assessment practices in the primary schools significantly differ from those contained in the written curriculum and are totally irrelevant to the learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills valued and emphasised by the current education system and employers.
- ii) This finding is corroborated by Allen, Elks, Outhred and Varly (2016), who in their report on Uganda's Assessment System, observed that Uganda's assessment practices have very remote connection to the knowledge and skills that learners need to succeed today and in the future. This is more evidence to conclude that the primary school assessment is constructively misaligned to the curriculum given that it does not directly address the intended learning outcomes.
- iii) **There is a clear mismatch between the purpose of assessment as contained in the curriculum and the one in practice.** Whereas according to the written primary school curriculum, the primary purpose of assessment is to improve the learning and teaching processes, most of the schools visited use assessment for other purposes that mainly constrain the teaching and learning than to inform the improvement of teaching and learning processes. Schools are using assessment to obtain grades for judging and comparing students and sometimes sorting learners according to their scores in the tests. Besides, it is also a general trend for schools to use assessment as a tool to deny the less academically able children their right to education as some schools encourage such learners to join other "poorly performing schools" that may be receptive of those learners branded "academically weak". The major reason given for this damaging and unethical practice is the need to continue with only those learners who are branded as "bright" children who will make the schools shine in the national examinations. This implies that assessment is being used as a school marketing and promotion tool rather than as a means of improving the learners' achievement of the stated learning outcomes.
- iv) **There is Discrepancy between what ought to be assessed and what is being assessed by Primary Schools**
- v) In as much as the current curriculum is competence based, with clearly stated anticipated learning outcomes that are expected to guide assessment, the findings reveal that schools' assessment practices are only testing for cognitive learning outcomes. Even the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) are strictly limited to cognitive outcomes and four subjects, ignoring the skills' laden subjects including the CAPEs. This has significantly affected curriculum implementation to the extent that teachers only teach to the test coupled with

drills that are aimed at coaching children to pass examinations as opposed to acquiring knowledge, skills and values. More evidence to this effect was provided by the District Inspectors of Schools. To illustrate, 37% of DIS' reported that assessment in primary schools is not guided by the syllabus. Rather, assessment is based on what is contained in past examination papers and speculation of the likely question items that might appear in the PLE. More evidence was got from the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) where it was reported that over 80% of district school inspection reports have indicated that schools teach and assess without reference to the national curriculum. DES as well reported that currently, assessment in many primary schools is not based on what the teachers have accomplished with their learners. Rather, after teaching, some schools buy assessment papers developed externally by some agencies.

- vi) **Continuous Assessment has been deliberately misconstrued as Continuous Testing within schools.** The findings reveal that between 36%-42.5% of the schools surveyed administered tests to their pupils daily. This practice was more prevalent in private schools (42.5%) compared to the government aided schools (36%). Most of the schools administer tests weekly, with almost half (50%) of the private schools being at the forefront of testing children every week (see Table 4.2). This is a worrying trend for curriculum implementation where schools spend most of their time assessing than teaching pupils. Sadly, this practice even cuts across the lower primary section where it was found that lower classes including P1 are as well grilled with frequent tests. This trend is mainly explained by the need to prepare learners to pass the national examinations in order to attract more learners, since schools use assessment as a marketing tool rather than as a corrective tool. Besides, some teachers who administer such frequent tests believe that they are implementing Continuous Assessment (CA).

Table 4.2: Percentage of schools and frequency of testing learners

FREQUENCY	Gov't Schools	Private Schools
Annually	3.40%	1.30%
Termly	10.40%	6.20%
Monthly	24.90%	18.30%
Weekly	43.90%	48.10%
Daily	36.10%	42.50%

Source: NPA Survey 2017. Note: This was a multiple response question and therefore the responses within each category exceed 100%

5. Assessment is not inclusive enough as it is being used by schools and the country to maintain and promote a few learners who manage to score higher grades and exclude those that do not score highly. Assessment is supposed to improve learning for all pupils in mainstream settings. Moreover, international best practice demands that assessment methods used must ensure that specific students are not disadvantaged. This therefore calls for flexibility within the various assessment methods, modes and formats to overcome any substantial disadvantage. Relatedly, the 1995 Constitution through articles, 21, 32 and 34, provided for recognition of people with disabilities and their right to education. Similarly, the Disability Act of 2006 made an even stronger case for inclusion of children with disabilities in the education system.

Whilst UNEB has tried to provide for different formats of assessment that are responsive to the particular special needs most especially deafness, low vision and blindness, available literature indicates that the assessment system is still not inclusive enough in terms of participation and attainment (Najjumba and Marshall 2013, Allen et al., 2016). Besides, this evaluation found that assessment is being used by schools and the country to maintain and promote a few learners who manage to score higher grades and exclude those that do not score highly. Moreover, just as Allen et al. (2016) found, assessment in Ugandan primary schools' privilege particular learning styles and knowledge domains. For instance, the system favours those that can memorise answers to the questions than those who cannot do. Further, the trends in national examinations suggest that the current assessment regime favours learners in prestigious and urban schools and those from elite families. This implies that the assessment practices are not responsive to the divergences caused by family, culture, location, among others.

1.4.2. Causes and Reinforcements of the current (irrelevant) Assessment Practices

Available literature maintains that assessment remains a significant challenge to most of education systems of the world, irrespective of level of development. Generally, countries are dissatisfied with their assessment system for being disconnected from the critical learning outcomes as contained in the written curricular and national education goals. Unfortunately, not a single reason can explain the overly mismatched assessment practices. Rather, it is the interactions and inter-lockings amongst the different elements of the assessment system that cause and reinforce the irrelevant assessment practices. To illustrate, where admissions to “good” education institutions and careers is squarely based on the grades attained, this will raise the stakes that parents, learners, teachers, schools, and other stakeholders in the assessment. In such circumstances, all efforts in teaching and learning will be on rehearsing the examinations that lead to entry into a good school or career. On the other hand, the institutional and policy architecture may as well perpetuate the irrelevant assessment practices. Nonetheless, the findings over emphasised the following as the most influential causes and reinforcements of the irrelevant assessment system.

- 1. High-stakes in assessment outcomes rather than the teaching and learning processes.** As earlier hinted, the respondent observed that insofar as assessment grades remain the sole gateway to the next level of education, the best schools, the best universities, and the premium careers and opportunities of life; then all efforts will be driven by the examinable curriculum. This creates challenges in ensuring validity, and integrity of assessment due to the risks introduced by the high-stakes in the exercise. For instance, the high-stakes have perpetuated theft of examination papers, cheating by candidates, inappropriate behaviours by invigilators, markers and examiners, and parents as each try to look for ways to ensure that their children get high scores to access good schools, jobs and careers (see Allen et al., 2016).
- 2. Lack of professional capacity of the teachers.** It is critical to note that, besides being the deliverer of lessons, the teacher is as well the one that designs, administers and scores the assessments. This therefore confers a greater responsibility on him/her which necessitates them to be competent. For instance, teachers must have capacity to plan, design and administer, score and interpret classroom assessment. Above all, is the need to be technically competent to conduct assessment for learning. The evaluation finds that 36% of teachers still have challenges to effectively assess all learning activities including co-curricular activities. In addition, 89% of the DIS' doubted the competence levels of teachers to assess pupils' learning activities.

Regarding other dimensions of assessment, the DIS' indicated that poor assessment practices by primary school teachers could be as a result of lack of competences to assess. For instance, 37% of the DIS' interviewed reported incidences of teachers assessing learners without following the syllabus; while 43% reported that teachers' assessment was not formative (it was mainly summative) and that not all classwork given was scored by teachers. It is evidenced that teachers mainly rely on written pen/pencil-to-paper tests and exams to assess learners all the time. (See Table 4.3)

Table 4.3: DIS' Perceptions on the ability of teachers to effectively assess learning

Assessment Quality Indicator	Agree
Assessment done by primary school teachers is guided by the syllabus	63%
Assessment done by the primary school teachers is formative	57%
All classwork and homework given to pupils is scored by teachers	57%
Teachers prepare pupils for assessment	65%
Teachers use tests and exams to assess learners all the time	86%

Source: NPA Survey, 2017

3. **Teacher Absenteeism.** Many empirical studies (EPRC, 2013, Allen et al., 2016) indicate that teacher absences from the classroom are a fundamental constraint on classroom learning and assessment processes. This is on the backdrop that effective classroom learning and assessment are a function of teacher's presence in classroom and the class time used for instruction. Whereas this evaluation did not measure teacher absenteeism, there were some items that were posed to teachers and DIS that would give some reflection on the different dimensions of absenteeism. Foremost, in as much as 86% of the teachers interviewed indicated that they are always present for class, majority indicated that time is wasted and little teaching is done. For instance, only 36% indicated that they start teaching on time while 64% indicated otherwise. This implies that teachers' presence in school does not necessarily imply that they are teaching. Based on the available statistics on teacher absenteeism, it can be concluded that teachers have very limited time for classroom activities including teaching and assessment. For instance, according to a study by the EPRC (2013) school absence rate was 23.6% while classroom absence rate was 52.7% with shrunk average effective classroom teaching time of 3 hours per day. Similar to the findings of this evaluation, the EPRC also found that classroom absence rate was higher than school absence rate, meaning that even when the teachers are present on the school compound, most of them don't step into class.

4.5. Time Allocated for Curriculum Implementation

Time allocation remains one of the major concerns in curriculum planning and implementation. The current curriculum provides for the weekly allocation of periods to each learning area/subject to ensure that all learning areas/subjects as presented in the different curricular documents are taught. The number of periods per week for P1-P2 are 40 lessons, P3 are 50 lessons per week and P4-P7 are 40 lessons per week.

A lesson in the thematic curriculum (P1-P3) runs for 30 minutes because the attention span of learners at this level is short and they cannot concentrate on one activity for a long time. On the other hand, the lessons in the transition and upper primary curriculum (P4 - P7) run for 40 minutes

because at this level learners are expected to be able to concentrate for an extra 10 minutes. A library lesson is included on the time table to support further development of literacy skills from P3-P7. Below is a sample of time allocation for the Primary Three (P.3) curriculum:

Table 4.4: Weekly time allocations for a typical Primary Three Curriculum

Subject/Learning Area	No. of Periods
Oral Literature	4
Mathematics	9
Literacy 1	6
Literacy 2	6
English	10
Creative Performing Arts- Music	3
Creative Performing Arts- Arts and Crafts	2
PE	5
RE	3
Library	2
Total	50

Source: NCDC Thematic Curriculum Document

Generally, at all cycles (i.e. thematic, transition and upper primary), the principles for time allocation require more time allocation for English and Mathematics. In fact, at all the levels, the two subjects must take the greatest proportion of time allocated to subjects. This is in line with the general focus and purpose of the primary school curriculum, that is to enhance the rapid development of literacy and numerical skills.

Evaluation Findings

- 1. Curriculum developers (NCDC), the policy makers (MoES), and 60.7% of the teachers affirm that the time allocated for curriculum implementation is adequate** They however added that timely implementation of the curriculum was mainly dependent on the quality of inspection.
- 2. The school timetable is not fully followed and emphasis is on only examinable subjects.** The evaluation further found that in as much as schools were following the time allocation guidelines contained in the curriculum to timetable their lessons, this was just for compliance purpose. The practice significantly differed from what was on the individual school timetables. For instance, even when schools timetabled music, art and crafts, and PE, these subjects were rarely taught and it so happened that in some schools, the gazetted time for such subjects was being used to teach the other examinable subjects. This means that mere timetabling of subjects does not mean that teaching strictly follows the timetable. Half of the teachers (50.3%) interviewed observed that their schools were not teaching music, arts and crafts and PE in accordance with the provisions of the curriculum. Rather, emphasis is put on the teaching of examinable subjects. This implies that the main reason for such a practice is the fact that teaching is driven by examination. To this end, some teachers recommended that if music, arts and crafts and PE are to be taught, they should be examinable.

3.

SECTION FIVE

5.0. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Primary School Curriculum

The curriculum development process entails a chain of activities and processes that are cyclic in nature. This implies that curriculum development is a continuous process and one that can never be completed at any one moment. One of the critical stages in curriculum development process is the monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This function entails mechanisms of ensuring control over curriculum implementation and the assessment of the whole curriculum value chain to generate feedback on the various elements of the curriculum with the intent to continuously align the curriculum to its original intention. Moreover, this function entails the evaluation of inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes of the education system for fitness of purpose.

According to the Education Act (2008), various stakeholders are provided with roles of undertaking monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum. The roles given to the different stakeholders reflect the fact that the provision of primary education is to a greater extent decentralized. Some of the stakeholders that have key roles to play in the M&E of the primary school curriculum include: MOES, Local Governments, NCDC, Directorate of Education Standards (DES), Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), schools, teachers, learners, parents, community representatives and NGOs supporting development of education.

Evaluation Findings

- i) **The NCDC has managed to perform some of the M&E roles as required by the NCDC Act, which have culminated into reviewing and revising of the different curricular including the one for primary and secondary.** The NCDC has a critical role to play in the M&E function conferred to it by the NCDC Act that requires it to investigate and evaluate the need for syllabus revision and curriculum reform at the various education levels including pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary. The findings of this evaluation indicate that the NCDC has tried to perform the M&E role as required by the NCDC Act, which have culminated into reviewing and revision of the different curricular including the one for primary and secondary. Nonetheless, the NCDC concedes that it has not been able to fully execute its mandate to this effect due to the low capacity and acute financial inadequacies. To this end, there have been few reviews of the curriculum and syllabi. Moreover, the M&E function requires a lot of data gathering and field operations that, according the NCDC are quite expensive, yet the institutions budget has over the last 5 years undergone significant cuts to the tune of 41%.
- ii) **Whilst DES is expected, through inspections, to ensure that schools implement the curriculum, it is acutely incapacitated, both in terms of human and financial resources, to perform its inspection function.** DES is charged with ensuring quality control of the education service. This implies that the DES is expected to play a critical role of ensuring that schools implement the curriculum to the latter. This, it does through the school inspection function. Nonetheless, this evaluation finds this agency acutely incapacitated to perform this function, both in term of human and financial resources. This is illustrated by many schools going without

any inspection for a whole term and beyond; poor quality of inspection reporting; lack of school improvement planning; and the partial implementation of the curriculum.

iii) LGs have not been effective in undertaking monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum.

The LGs are fully in charge of providing the primary education service given that it is supposed to be fully decentralized. It would therefore be expected that LGs perform the M&E of the curriculum. This evaluation finds that in as much as LGs are implementing the curriculum, they have not been effective in monitoring and evaluating it. This is pegged on various reasons. Foremost, some LGs are not aware that it is their function to monitor and evaluate the curriculum and suggest reforms. This is evidenced in their complaint that NCDC does remotely involve them in the curriculum review, yet they are supposed to be actively involved in the entire process. Inadequate capacity is the other reason for the poor performance of the M&E function of the curriculum. Lastly, inadequate financial resources have been given as the other reason for poor performance in this regard.

iv) The civil society including UWEZO have to some extent supported the monitoring and evaluation function of the primary curriculum.

They have published serial reports regarding the relevance and adequacy of the various elements of the curriculum. Most of their reports indicate inadequacies that would necessitate subsequent revisions and reforms. Particularly, the UWEZO reports have indicated that the teaching and learning processes are constrained and are not being undertaken as expected; the children are not achieving from teaching activities as anticipated; and that the assessment regimes are inadequate and narrow.

v) The parents and local communities seem not to be actively engaged in monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum.

Besides the general complaints that the curriculum is irrelevant, they have not translated such observations into a force for change. Ironically, reports indicate that parents and local communities sometimes have perpetuated the status quo. For instance, the findings indicate that some parents and local communities are opposed to the thematic curriculum and most especially to the use of local languages for instruction in lower primary. However, the findings also point to the fact that some parents and communities are not aware of their roles particularly when it comes to monitoring and evaluating the curriculum. Besides, there are reports that they are not involved in the process.

SECTION SIX

6.0. Recommendations and Conclusion

In order to ensure primary education curriculum delivers improved UPE outcomes, the following are recommended:

Recommendations

6.1. Urgently invest in teachers' professional development to enable them efficiently and effectively implement the curriculum. This requires the following:

- i) **Rejuvenate the teacher professional development support mechanisms particularly the Coordinating Centres (CCs) and the Coordinating Centre Tutors (CCTs).** These help to provide on-site reorientation and professional support for teachers in the identified key areas of weakness including lesson planning, assessment, classroom pedagogy and curriculum interpretation. It is critical to provide transport (or service the currently grounded CCT motorbikes) and other means of facilitation for CCTs to reach as many schools in need support in time.
- ii) **Establish a National Institute of Teacher Education and Development** to provide leadership for training, reskilling and development of the teachers and education administrators for them to be able to deliver the curriculum as intended.
- iii) **MoES should implement the scheme of service as a tool to motivate, attract, retain suitably qualified teachers and reinforce school level supervision.** The evaluation found that school level supervision is one of the key practices that make private schools perform better than public schools.
- iv) **Enforce strict entry and training requirements for primary school teachers beyond those that require one to barely pass a few subjects.** This will strengthen primary school teachers capability at pedagogy and curriculum interpretation and implementation. These have a bearing on the relatively weak candidates that barely fulfill the requirements to join the teaching profession. Any education system that has a future, recruits the best candidates for teachers through a rigorous selection and training process. Therefore, it is recommended that the minimum entry requirement into the teacher training college should either be raised to A-level or the length of training should be raised from the current 2 years to 3 years to provide ample time to adequately skill the teacher trainee.

6.2. The NCDC should develop a comprehensive strategy for meaningful and perpetual engagement with all stakeholders in curriculum development.

This is required to address the double constraints of acceptability and relevance, with the core curriculum implementing institutions particularly the schools and local authorities. The strategy should provide for an unconstrained platform through which schools and local authorities can play a central role in the planning and development of the curriculum.

- 6.3. Urgently strengthen NCDC into a robust institution (i.e. one stop centre for curriculum activities) to undertake critical research, and conduct credible consultations, write and continuously review the curriculum as the country requires.** This necessitates that an adequate budget is provided to enable the institution fully execute its mandate. In particular, NCDC should be resourced to fill the currently 68 (44%) vacant positions that are required to execute its mandate.
- 6.4. Undertake targeted legal and policy reforms to enable for meaningful multi-sectoral collaborations in the development and implementation for the primary curriculum.** Particularly, there is need for legal provisions to: ensure the joint development of the primary school and primary teacher training curricula, and require close collaboration between the assessment bodies and curriculum developers. Above all, laws, policies that perpetuate the silo mode operations in curriculum development and implementation should be dismantled.
- 6.5. Harmonize and enforce the language of instruction and assessment policy for the lower primary school regardless of whether private or government to optimize its intended benefits.** Many schools are hesitant to implement this policy given the misalignment between the language of instruction and language of assessment at the lower primary level. They observe that it is of no essence to instruct learners in local language, yet assessment is in English. There is therefore need to align the language of assessment to the language of instruction at the lower primary school section.
- 6.6. The entire Primary School Curriculum should be based on themes to eliminate the disconnect between lower and upper primary.** There is need to make the whole primary school curriculum thematic to ensure alignment not only within the entire primary school curriculum but also between the primary and the lower secondary curricular which is as well arranged around thematic learning areas.
- 6.7. Adequately invest in Primary Schools to enable them deliver the curriculum.** The MoES should provide in time, the threshold amount of physical infrastructure and teaching materials to every public school to effectively operate. At the minimum, each school should be guaranteed at least 7 permanent classrooms, a staffroom and separate toilets for boys and girls. Also, according to the preliminary costs' analysis, capitation grant should be raised from UGX 10,000 to a minimum of UGX 59,000 per year per pupil, if schools are to optimally operate.
- 6.8. The inspection function should be capacitated to quality assure curriculum implementation.** Towards this, the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) and Local Governments (LGs) should be capacitated in terms of budgets and human resources to undertake quality inspection and instruction. In particular, the current human resources for the inspection function cannot enable it undertake quality inspection and instruction. For instance, some LGs have extreme inspector-to-school ratios to the tune of 1:450 compared to the internationally recommended 1:40. Therefore, adequate facilitation should enable DES and LGs to conduct the required and desired inspection rounds.

- 6.9. The role to approve the list of vetted textbooks to be procured should revert to NCDC.** This is intended to promote separation of powers and address the quality aspect of textbooks being produced. IMU should lead the procurement process only up to the development of the list of text book for approval by NCDC. The NCDC through its Board shall then examine and confirm evaluation aspects and approve the list of the textbooks that meet 100% of the curriculum content.
- 6.10. The MoES through UNEB should embark on a phased overhaul of the current assessment regime to ensure that it examines the entire curriculum and to make it aligned to the entire curriculum.** In addition, teachers should be trained on the practicum of undertaking continuous assessment, which is the preferred method recommended by the curriculum. Equally, materials that complement continuous assessment should be provided to teachers on time.
- 6.11. The guidelines on assessment should be enforced to limit the unethical practice of frequent (daily tests and weekly tests) testing of learners in schools.** From the findings, some schools give tests to their learners daily, meaning that such schools have no time to implement the curriculum but to drill children on the anticipated examination questions. Alternatively, there is need for a comprehensive assessment policy to define the assessment that needs to be undertaken in schools and at the national level and prescribe the consequences for non-compliance. Above all, given that the damaging assessment regimes are perpetuated by among others the high stakes that parents, learners, and schools have in the assessment process, the long-term strategy would be for stakeholders to meaningfully engage and seek convergence in opinions on the purpose and scope of assessment in primary schools.

7.0. Conclusion

The current primary school curriculum is relevant and adequate to the attainment of UPE objectives. It does not require major overhaul to deliver intended UPE outcomes. However, to make the curriculum effective, there are areas that need to be urgently addressed to ensure that the curriculum is implemented efficiently and effectively as intended to achieve UPE outcomes.

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