**KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 10TH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FORUM (NDPF) ORGANIZED BY NPA ON 24TH OCTOBER 2019 AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT CONFERENCE HALL**

**1.0 Introduction:**

On Thursday 24th October, 2019, National Planning Authority (NPA) organized the 10th National Development Planning Forum under theme **“Taking Stock of the gains, Challenges and Lessons Learnt from the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Policy”.** The purpose of the forum was to enable the public to discuss the findings and recommendations from NPA’s comprehensive evaluation of the UPE Policy. The forum started with a presentation of the key study findings and recommendations by the NPA Executive Director, Dr. Muvawala Joseph

The chief guest and the Minister of Education and Sports, Hon. Janet Kataha Museveni was represented by Mr. Kakooza Alex who also delivered a speech on her behalf.. Among the many prominent dignitaries that graced the occasions was the Minister of State for planning, Hon. Bahati David who highlighted the following in his speech.

1. The minster appreciated NPA for the great work in producing the comprehensive evaluation reports of UPE with an overall conclusion that the program is very much important and that the government should keep investing in this programme.
2. The government has over the past 20 years prioritized providing access to primary education. The focus of government should now be on improving the quality of education by improving learning outcomes, numeracy, and soft skills.
3. Investment in Early Childhood development to improve efficiency and reduce repetitions at primary education. The government has allocated shillings 1 billion Uganda shillings in the FY 2019/20 to support the roll-out of Early Grade Reading.(EGR)
4. To date, the government has invested over 2 trillion Uganda shillings in UPE and USE in addition to other sources provided by development partners.
5. The economy has expanded 10 times in a decade therefore the Government of Uganda is able to adequately invest in human resource capital most specifically, UPE and USE programmes.
6. The Government and Development partners have also, so far invested USD 200 million towards the implementation of the Uganda Inter-Governmental Fiscal Transfer Programme for results.
7. He thanked NPA for the timely assessment taken to review the implementation of the UPE policy since its inception in 1997.
8. He implored the different stakeholders to carefully study the findings of this assessment as they are critical and will fit into the third National Development Plan.

**2.0 Panel Discussion**

***2.1 Panelist: Mr. Kakooza Alex, Permanent Secretary MoES***

**Question***: What do you make of the continuing challenges in primary education and how will they be addressed over time?*

Response:

1. The teacher policy will overcome most of the challenges related to teachers and learning outcomes because the policy provides for continuous professional development and accreditations among others.
2. Most of the challenges in UPE stem from low financing. There is, therefore, need for the government to increase capitation grant to the recommended Shs 63,000 and 59,000 for urban and rural schools respectively per pupil.
3. To improve learning outcomes, a method of EGR has been piloted in primary schools supported by a grant from the Global Partnership for Education which is expected to be rolled out across the country in all primary schools next year.
4. As per the recent Government proposals, the Directorate of Education Standards should be an independent agency which is combined with National Council for Higher Education
5. Government involvement in ECD is primarily on setting standards and policies and ensuring that teachers possess the relevant qualifications to bring the holistic growth of the children in ECD.

**2.2 *Panelist: Dr. Nakabugo Mary Goretti UWEZO – Twaweza Country Lead and Regional Manager and UWEZO East Africa Country Coordinator***

**Question***: Why are the learning Outcomes still low and how can they be improved upon?*

**Response:**

1. Improving learning outcomes will be gradual since this key indicator was prioritized at the beginning of UPE.
2. Many of the pupils enrolling for primary education don’t have access to ECD (87 percent) hence investment in ECD will offload the burden at primary by reducing the high repetition and dropout rates.
3. Community-based ECD is successfully working in some countries and Uganda should implement such an undertaking through benchmarking.
4. Teaching to the test: There is a misalignment between the curriculum and the testing process.
5. Access to the syllabus by the teachers needs to be improved upon to guide them in lesson planning and content delivery.

**2.3 *Panelist: Mr. Kirill Vasilie – Senior Education Specialist and Task team leader- World Bank Group Representative***

**Question***: What can be done to solve the keys challenges highlighted in the reports*

**Response:**

1. There is need to ensure that learning takes place in schools and measurable indicators for learning outcomes should be considered for-example, the ability of the 10-year old to read and comprehend a simple short story. According to a recent study conducted by UNESCO, in rich countries, only 9% of 10 year old children cannot read a story compared to more than 50% of the same cohort in lower income countries. Specifically in Uganda, the share of 10 year old children who cannot read a simple story stands at 83%
2. The focus should be put on achievable outcomes among which should include:

* Commit to the objective of improving learning outcomes
* Investment in ECD should be prioritized since a growing body of evidence highlights that ECD improves the learning outcomes in primary schools as well as reduces repetition and dropout rates.
* Empower and support teachers along the way with continuous professional development.
* Schools should offer a favorable environment (safe) for kids to be happy and learn
* More public investments are desirable therefore Government should think of an effective cost sharing mechanism. Uganda is doing better than most countries in the region as it spends twice as less to achieve the results which places the country in a good position to request for more education funding.

**2.4 *Panelist: Hajjat Sawuya Ndifuna, Private School Owner***

**Question**: *The report indicates better results from private schools in comparison to public schools. What do you think contributes to these differences?*

**Response:**

1. The private schools directly manage enrollments and promotions of the learners which are based on performance while public schools rely on automatic grade promotion.
2. Delays in the delivery of funds by the government to public schools undermine planning and school performance
3. Private schools have the right to recruit qualified and competent teachers and their retention is based on merit which is not the case in government schools.
4. While supervision in public schools is still low and hence limits learning outcomes, private schools continuously monitor, supervise and motivate their teachers.
5. Political interference in public schools undermines their performance

**2.5 *Panelist: Mr. Musoke Joseph – Municipal Education officer of Kamuli Municipal Council.***

**Question**: *What can be done better to improve the performance of rural schools?*

**Response:**

1. There is a need to analyze, redesign and redraw the interventions for schools in the rural areas.
2. An ambitious program on parenting needs to be developed and implemented with the overall focus of sensitizing the parents on their roles.
3. Feeding in schools needs to be emphasized since there is an inverse relationship between learning and poor feeding.

**3.0 Key responses and recommendations from the Plenary Session.**

1. National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) needs to be funded by government to enable us know the status of the learning outcomes.
2. The study findings need to be incorporated into NDPIII
3. There is a need for segmenting education funding (Poor and Rich)
4. Skilling Uganda strategy allows for learners who have dropped out at any level of education to joining any skilling program up to Ph.D. level
5. In the next 13 years, can we replace A level with TVET to increase employment creation and employability?
6. Head teachers need periodical training to enhance their performance.
7. The level of professionalism is declining therefore a study should be undertaken to find out the factors that are driving this trend.
8. National Curriculum Development Centre needs to reclaim its roles of accepting text books that go into the syllabus
9. A clear incentive structure be put in place by government to reward better performing teachers
10. There is need for NPA to review and re-think the objectives of the UPE program with the aim of setting more realistic and achievable targets on learning outcomes.
11. The government should stop hiring incompetent and non-performing teachers
12. There are so many Grade three primary teachers and yet the government is advocating for teachers to possess a minimum of a degree. Therefore, government should rationalize the existing PTCs.
13. The process of recruitment of primary school teachers especially at district levels should be revised as they are many indirect costs associated with this process.
14. There is a mismatch between the inspectorate functions at the central level and the district level therefore there is need to create stronger linkages between the two.
15. A food policy that encourages parents to feed their children should be introduced.
16. The role of management of schools should be shifted from the Central Government to other bodies such as Faith-based foundation bodies among others.