

IMPROVING EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN UGANDA: EVIDENCE FROM THE PRIMARY EDUCATION SUB-SECTOR



Ibrahim Kasirye
Linda Nakato
Rehema Kahunde
Blessing Atwine
Regean Mugume

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Any enquiries can be addressed in writing to the Executive Director on the following address:

Economic Policy Research Centre
Plot 51, Pool Road, Makerere University Campus
P.O. Box 7841, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256-414-541023/4
Fax: +256-414-541022
Email: eprc@eprc.or.ug
Web: www.eprcug.org

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is vast recognition of a global learning crisis for children as global efforts shift from focusing on access to schooling to learning. This is also embedded in Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG 4), aimed at achieving “quality education” with a focus on learning for all. At the national level, Uganda’s National Development Plan (NDPIII) through the human capital development program not only focuses on schooling but also specifies outcomes related to learning, like the learning-adjusted years of schooling.

Uganda has registered relative success in improving access to education. Specifically, for primary education, enrolment increased from 8.26 million in 2016 to 10.7 million in 2020 (NRM Manifesto, 2021), the pupil-classroom ratio improved from 63:1 in 2015 to 49:1 in 2020, the pupil-teacher ratio improved from 43:1 in 2015 to 34:1 in 2020, the PLE pass rate increased from 86% in 2015 to 90.3% in 2020, the survival rate to primary seven increased from 30.10% in 2015 to 34.38% in 2020 (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022).

Despite this success in schooling, there have been challenges in translating this increased access to schooling into learning. Many pupils are completing primary education without acquiring the basic competencies. For example, according to the 2021 Uwezo National Learning Assessment (Uwezo Uganda, 2021), over 25% of primary three children could read nothing from a primary two-level English story, and an almost equal percentage (25.8%) could only read letters and not words. Overall, for the primary level - Primary 3 to Primary 7 - at least 11.6% of the children cannot read anything from a primary two-level English story, an increase from 6.2% in 2018. They observed a similar trend for numeracy, with over 10.8% of children in primary 3 unable to solve primary two-level numeracy tasks. This poses persistent challenges because once children lag early on, many are likely to continue in school gaining no learning or drop out altogether. This affects the country’s ability to meet global targets such as the SDG4 relating to quality education for all and has implications for the country’s socio-economic transformation.

Both government and development partners have undertaken several initiatives to tackle such learning challenges. These range from improving the pupil-to-book ratio to enhancing learning, tackling teacher absenteeism, and introducing a new teacher policy in 2021 to ensure an adequate supply of qualified teachers.

Interactions between different education actors, including teachers and pupils, lead to learning. However, it is crucial to recognize that the various actors are embedded in systems to analyze challenges in the primary education sub-sector and improve the interactions between the different actors to achieve learning. Hence, it is imperative to understand these actors, their interactions, and how they influence system outcomes to make meaningful and lasting improvements. This study takes a systems approach to diagnose the systemic drivers of incoherence in the primary education sub-sector in Uganda, highlighting how the education system can overcome this incoherence to tackle the learning crisis and deliver learning to all children.

This study aims to facilitate the government’s use of “systems thinking” to diagnose components of the education system that are not working together as well as they could to deliver learning. Specifically, the study:

- a) Identifies the key actors in Uganda’s primary education system and specifies the relationships between them;
- b) Identifies the primary alignments(s) of the relationships;
- c) Surfaces incoherences within the system; and
- d) Identifies priorities for reform to create better alignment around improving learning outcomes.

We structure the rest of the report as follows. Section 2 presents the approach adopted for the study, including the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) framework and the methodology. Section 3 maps the key actors in the primary education system and describes the relationships between them according to the RISE framework. Section 4 discusses alignments of the different components of the primary education system with respect to

the RISE framework. Section 5 presents incoherence within the system, and section 6 concludes and presents policy recommendations.

2. APPROACH

2.1 The Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) Systems Framework

The study employs the RISE systems framework to investigate the objectives. The framework provides an analytical tool to examine and understand the key actors in an education system, their relationships, and how they interact to produce different systems outcomes (Pritchett, 2015). The RISE framework is composed of three components: (i) key relationships, (ii) design elements, and (iii) system alignments.

Key relationships

This component defines the actors in the education system and the relationship between them. It is based on a principal-agent model where the principal wishes to accomplish a certain task and gets an agent to help them complete it. It comprises four key accountability relationships, i.e., politics,

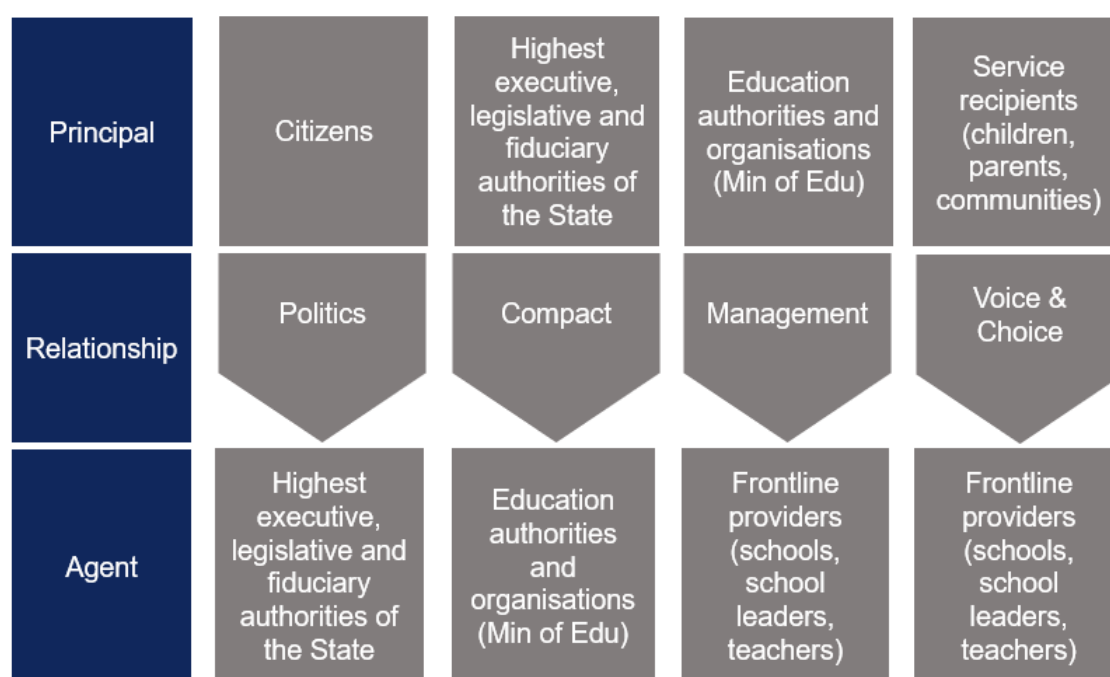
compact, management, and voice and choice.

Politics describes the relationship between citizens and the state's highest executive, legislative, and fiduciary authorities. Here, the citizens are the principals, while the country's highest authorities are the agents. As principals, citizens exercise their authority in different ways. One way is through participation in elections where the citizens cast their votes according to who speaks to their needs, for example, for the education sector. Equally, through participation in civil society organizations, citizens make their expectations known to the highest state authorities and hold them accountable in the same regard.

Compact describes the relationship between the highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities as principals and the Education authorities and organizations as agents. When citizens make their requests known to the country's highest authorities, they channel the same through different education authorities who assist in implementation, hence acting as a voice through which they relay objectives of the politics relationship to those in charge of the delivery of education.

Management defines the relationship between education authorities, organizations, and frontline education providers.

Figure 1 Accountability relationships in the education system



Source: Spivack, 2021

The education authorities and organizations are the principals in this relationship and the frontline providers, which include schools, school leaders, and teachers, are the agents.

Finally, **voice and choice** define the relationship between service recipients, including children, parents, and communities, as principals and frontline providers as agents. The principals in this relationship exercise their authority and demand accountability from frontline providers in two ways; one, they exert authority by voicing what they wish to see in a school or voicing their dissatisfaction with the way teachers conduct themselves. If they do not meet the above, the principals then exercise their authority through choice, i.e., they look for a teacher or school that satisfies their needs and requirements.

Design elements

This second component of the RISE framework defines the nature of the interaction between the principal and agent in terms of what the agent asks the principal to do, how the principal equips the agents to do it, and monitors and motivates their performance (Pritchett, 2015).

As explained below, there are five design elements, including (i) delegation, (ii) finance, (iii) support, (iv) information, and (v) motivation. Delegation is what the principal mandates or asks the agent to do. Finance details the resources that the principal provides to the agent to carry out the mandated tasks. Support is through assistance and training the principal provides to the agent to do their job, i.e., pre-service and in-service training for the case of education. Information is how the principal evaluates the agent's performance, i.e., information that the principal uses to evaluate the agent's performance. Motivation is how the principal motivates the agent and how the agent's welfare is contingent on their performance against set objectives. Motivation can be intrinsic (from within/agent dependent) or extrinsic (mediated by the principal).

When combined, the two components discussed above form the RISE diagnostic framework, a 5*4 framework, with the relationships as the columns and design elements as the rows (figure 2).

Figure 2 The 5*4 Education Systems Framework

Five design elements of each relationship of accountability (Principal (P) to Agent (A))	Principal - Agent Relationships			
	Politics: Citizens and the highest authorities of the state	Compact: Highest authority of the State to Education authority	Management: Education authorities and schools, school leaders, and teachers	Voice & Choice: parents/children and schools/school leaders/ teachers
Delegation: What principal wants agent to do.				
Finance: Resources principal allocates to agent.				
Support: Preparation and assistance that principal provides to agent.				
Information: How the principal assesses the agent's performance.				
Motivation: How the principal motivates the agent.				
Performance of the system is the result of the feedback loops and relationships between the actors				

Source: Pritchett, 2015

System alignments

This forms the third component of the RISE diagnostic framework, highlighting the main objective that parts and the entire system of education aim to achieve. For a well-functioning system aiming at delivering learning, relationships of accountability need to be aligned with a learning objective across the distinct design elements. In this case, relationships are aligned around all children's learning. Hence, clear goals for learning are articulated, financed, and supported. However, systems of education are often incoherent in learning in the following ways. First, a system may be aligned towards a different objective other than learning for all. These alignments include:

Selection: In such a system, relationships of accountability are aligned around selecting the deserving few who will get a credential and a place at an elite university/job. Such a system often emphasizes performance, especially in high stake examinations like the Primary Leaving Examinations in Uganda.

Access: In a system aligned for access, relationships are aligned around expanding access and attainment. Based on the RISE framework, quality is usually defined as meeting minimum input standards, such as enrolment, grade attainment, and progression.

Socialization: Relationships are aligned around socialization or ideological goals. In such a setting, they give priority to socializing children with specific values. These can be, for instance, religious or political values.

Patronage or special interests: clientelism characterizes the relationship of accountability. Short-term political objectives dominate, and the system has lost its educational core. Special interests (i.e., teacher unions) may dominate; the need to meet special interest needs can become the primary focus.

Misalignment: The accountability and design elements' relationships may be misaligned. For instance, in the management relationship, the Ministry of Education may expect teachers to deliver a curriculum that prioritizes foundational literacy for all but use the information on exam scores as the primary criteria to assess the performance of the frontline providers. This raises incoherence between delegation and information. This will ultimately force

frontline providers to emphasize exam scores and curriculum completion at the expense of ensuring pupils' mastery of the curriculum content.

Misalignment may also occur within design elements (between relationships). For example, the Ministry of Education may launch an initiative aiming to use the local language as a language of instruction at the foundational levels of schooling and delegate this to schools and teachers to implement. However, parents may prioritize their children learning and speaking English, pressuring teachers to instruct in English even at the foundational level.

2.2 Data and methods

The study mainly employed document reviews and qualitative methods to analyze the primary education system in Uganda. The analysis followed the RISE framework discussed above. In addition, we held a validation meeting to discuss, contextualize, and improve the findings. We discuss the adopted methods below.

Document review

This involved reviewing government policy documents, especially education policy-related documents, and secondary information, including gray literature and published journal articles. During this process, existing evidence was collected and analyzed following the diagnostic framework. Gaps that required further probing and further analysis were also identified at this stage. Based on the document review, research tools, specifically questionnaires, were developed to be used in the primary data collection stage.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods were the primary method of data collection and analysis employed. These involved seeking views from different stakeholders on their delegated mandates, information used to assess their performance, finance provided by the principles to fulfill their roles, and support and motivation received to deliver on their mandates. The study adopted the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) approach to gathering information about management and voice and choice relationships. In addition, in-depth interviews (IDIs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were used to collect information about the compact relationship.

We conducted FGDs through regional workshops covering

eight regions: Eastern Uganda, South-Western Uganda, Western Uganda, West-Nile region, northern Uganda, Central Uganda, and Kampala sub-regions. Participants were selected from different districts, as shown in Table A1 in the annex. Workshop participants included district authorities (i.e., District Education Officers, District Inspectors, Center Coordinating Tutors, and District service commission representatives), school leaders (i.e., private school directors, Private and government school headteachers, School Management Committee representatives, and Directors of Studies), teachers (Private, government, Lower Primary, Upper primary, Rural, and urban mix), and parents, Community Opinion leaders, Religious leaders, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) representatives. We mobilized workshop participants with the help of the District Education Officers in each selected district.

KIs and IDIs with central government officials like the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) were conducted to gather information relevant to the compact and management relationships of the framework.

3. KEY ACTORS IN UGANDA'S PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

3.1 Overview of Uganda's Primary Education System

Uganda's education system is divided into four cycles; pre-primary/early childhood, which usually lasts three years; primary, which is seven years; secondary, which is six years - ordinary level (lower secondary) covering four years and advanced level (upper secondary) covering two years, after which students advance to university or other tertiary institutions.

Notably, the primary education cycle is divided into three sections; lower primary, which starts from primary one to primary three; transition grade, which is primary four; and the upper primary, which is from primary five to primary seven. At the end of primary seven, pupils sit for a high-stakes Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) conducted by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), which

determines their progression into lower secondary.

Relatedly, the primary-level curriculum is delivered in three phases developed by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC). In lower primary, pupils follow the thematic curriculum, which emphasizes the use of themes, local language as the medium of instruction, and continuous assessment of learners' achievements. In the transition grade (grade 4), pupils use the transition curriculum, which shifts from learning through themes to subject-based learning, and gradually shifts from using familiar/local language to using English as a medium of instruction. Finally, in the upper primary, pupils follow the upper primary curriculum, which is purely subject-based.

Concerning the education service providers in the primary cycle, there is a mix of government-aided (established by faith-based foundation bodies), purely public schools, and privately owned schools. According to the 2017 Education Statistical Abstract, 59% of the available 20,305 primary schools are government-aided (Ministry of Education, 2019). Government-aided schools have a tuition-free policy following the introduction of the Universal Primary Education Policy in 1997. Private schools comprise the mainstream/traditional schools that follow the national curricula as explained above, and international schools that follow international curricula like the National Curriculum of England, International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) curriculum, and Accelerated Christian Education curriculum, etc. A small percentage of children attend home schooling.

3.2 Mapping key actors and relationships between them

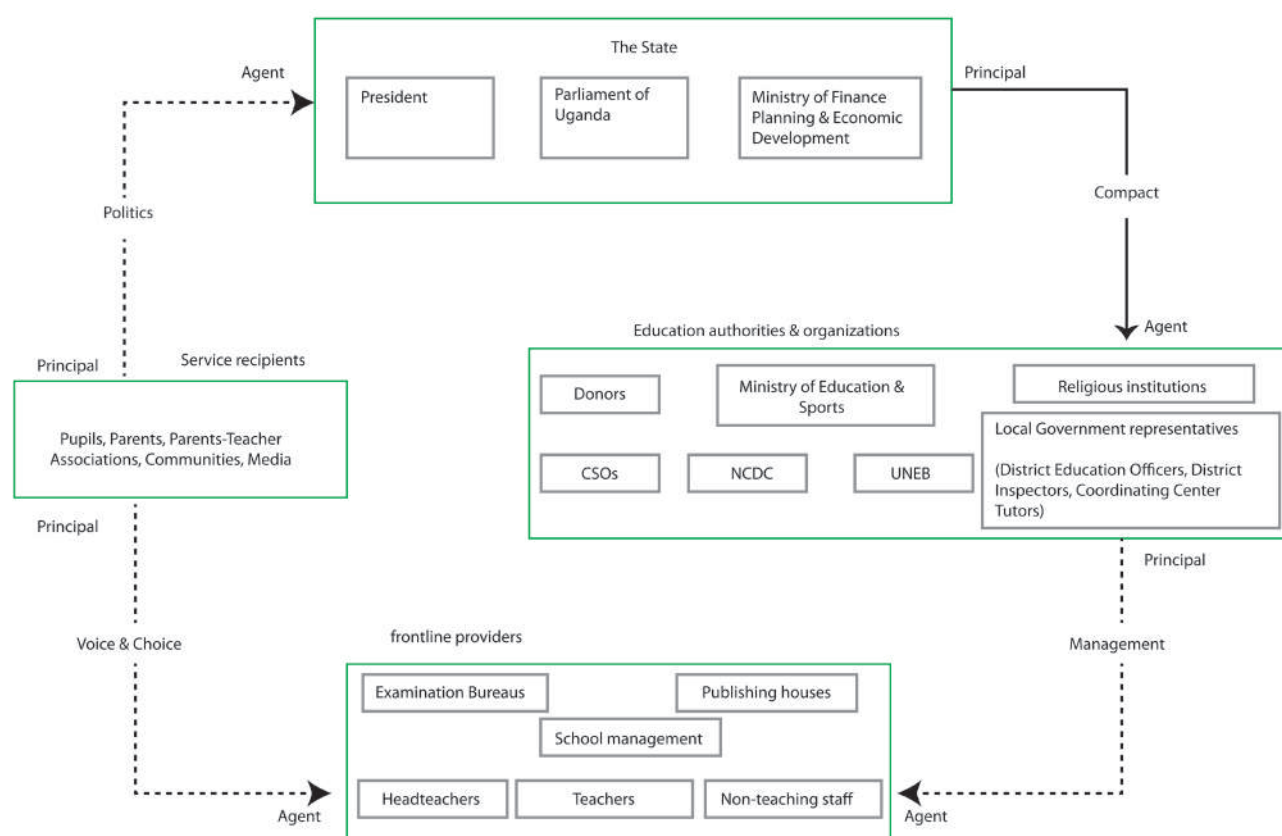
Following the RISE diagnostic framework, figure 3 highlights the different actors along the accountability relationships for Uganda's primary education system. In the politics relationship, the principals are the citizens, and the agents are the highest executive authority (president), the highest legislative authority (the parliament of Uganda), and the highest fiduciary authority (the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED)). In Uganda's setting, the politics relationship is key and influences the Ministry of Education and Sports operations and the education sector. However, this study focuses on compact, management, voice, and choice relationships.

For the compact relationship, the principals are the president, parliament, and MoFPED. The agents are the education authorities and organizations. These include the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the leading agent in education. The MoES also includes other entities like the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), which handles curriculum development and the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), the national assessment body. At the Primary level, UNEB oversees the high-stakes Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) that pupils write at the end of the primary cycle in primary seven. Other actors identified as agents in the compact relationship include religious foundation bodies, donors, civil society organizations, and local government representatives such as DEOs, District inspectors, and Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs).

The education authorities and organizations identified above become principals in the management relationship. They oversee frontline providers who include the primary schools, both government and private, school leaders like headteachers and private school directors, and teaching and non-teaching staff. Other agents include private publishers of textbooks like MK publishers and McMillan and examination bureaus like Sipro Educational Services Limited and Prime educational consult.

As shown in the diagnostic framework in figure 3, frontline providers are agents in both the management and voice & choice relationships. In the voice and choice relationship, the principals are service recipients who include the pupils, parents often represented by the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and communities where these schools are located.

Figure 3 Accountability relationships for Uganda's Primary Education system



Source: Authors' own construct

4. SYNTHESIS OF ALIGNMENTS FOR DIFFERENT DESIGN ELEMENTS AND SUB-DESIGN ELEMENTS

4.1 Compact relationship

The compact relationship is largely aligned for access with a few selection components, as summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1 Summary of the key findings in the Compact relationship

Element	Sub-element	Key findings
Delegation	High-level targets	- Increased access to education as measured by enrolment rates (UPE Policy 1997). This has increased over the years e.g., from 7.5 million in 2007 to 8.8 million in 2017. - Increased completion rates at primary seven and transition to secondary level (NDPII, 2015/16-2019/20). NDPIII targets to increase transition rates from 61 in FY 2017/18 to 79 in FY2024/25 - Increased average years of schooling from 6.1 to 11 (NDP III, 2020/21-2024/25), NRM manifesto 2021-26. - Increased pass rates, especially at Primary Leaving Examinations.
	Human Resource goals	- The focus is on attracting and retaining enough qualified teachers rather than good teaching - Quality is defined by thin observable inputs like improving teacher-pupil ratio and class size (Budget strategy, 2023-24) e.g., recruiting 2,650 primary school teachers to enhance staff levels.
	De jure/de facto delegation gap	There is a large gap between what is laid out in these policy documents and the actual implementation. For instance, in-service training is not regularly undertaken as laid out.
Finance	How is finance for education structured?	- Financing decisions for each FY are guided by a budget strategy that follows national priorities. - Financing decisions for the primary education cycle are mostly justified in terms of access and expansion - Non-wage recurrent budget allocations to Local Governments prioritize enrolments.
	How is financing for teachers structured	Salaries for primary teachers are determined by a compensation scheme which is not responsive to attracting, retaining, and motivating quality teaching
	How is finance for other education inputs structured	- Financing decisions for non-wage are usually based on enrolment - The largest proportion of spending goes to financing inputs such as the construction and renovation of school facilities, and the supply of teaching materials
	Where and to what extent is discretion for finance in education distributed throughout the system?	- At each level in the budgeting process, different entities have discretion over the allocation. - The final approval of fiscal allocations and the final budget rests with the cabinet and the parliament. - Final financing decisions are made at the top due to limited resources.
Information	How is information for education structured?	General focus on enrolment rates, transition, completion, and pass rates- especially in PLE, and thin inputs like the total number of schools, teacher-pupil ratio, infrastructure like the classrooms and toilets
	How does the system determine that education is of sufficient quality?	Quality is measured by a pupil's achievement in literacy, numeracy, and life skills measured through performance on the examinable subjects
	What information is included in the EMIS system?	EMIS tracks inputs like classrooms, teachers, and stances but does not track learning.

A detailed discussion of each design element follows in the next sub-sections.

4.1.1 Delegation

The delegation element in the compact relationship comprises three sub-elements covering high-level targets, human resources goals, and the de jure/de facto delegation gap. It is aligned for access, as discussed below.

High-level targets: This sub-element covers areas pertaining to the priorities of the education system for the state executive authority and what the executive authority needs to see the ministry of education deliver to consider it to be successful. They reflected these priorities in national strategic documents like the National Development Plans, National Budget Framework Papers, and NRM manifestos. Since the NRM government came into power in 1986, the focus has been increasing access to education through rising enrolment rates. This is reflected in deliberate steps such as enacting the Universal Primary Education policy in 1997, which saw the abolition of tuition fees for public schools.

Currently, and with relative success concerning access to education, there is a move towards ensuring the quality of education. However, this is still measured through thin indicators like completion and retention rates. For example, the NDPII (2015/16 – 2019/20) targeted to increase the completion rate of primary seven and increase the transition rate to secondary, and the current national development plan (NDP III 2020/21 – 2024/25) targets to increase the average years of schooling from 6.1 to 11 years. Similarly, the NRM manifesto 2021-26 promises to ensure children complete at least 11 years of school. Hence, the executive authorities need to see the Ministry of Education and Sports deliver such inputs as higher enrolments, completion rates, and transition rates in addition to improved Primary Leaving Examinations pass rates, Pupil-teacher ratios, Pupil-classroom ratios, and literacy rates which makes this sub-element largely aligned for access.

Human resources: This sub-element covers how the executive sets out human resource goals. The sub-element is aligned for access, as there is a focus on attracting and retaining enough qualified teachers instead of good teaching. Quality is defined by thin observable school features/inputs as the pupil-teacher ratio and class size. For example, the Budget Strategy 2023-24 opines that “staffing levels will be enhanced by recruiting 2,650 primary school teachers in the

least staffed Local Governments to improve Teacher-Pupil Ratio”. Moreover, the NRM manifesto 2021-2026 points out improving teacher living conditions focusing particularly on staff accommodation.

De jure/de facto delegation gap: This sub-element discusses how much of a gap exists between articulated and actual goals. Overall, clear and articulate goals and objectives are set out in policy documents as the performance management guidelines for tertiary institutions and schools (2020), the National Teacher Policy (2019), etc. However, there is an enormous gap between what is laid out in these policy documents and the actual implementation. Discrepancies in articulated and actual goals often stem from conflicting interests of the different actors and limited financing. For example, we sometimes observe presidential directives overriding the articulated policy guidelines. Teacher in-service training also highlights the sizeable gap between articulated and actual goals. Whereas this is supposed to be done on a continuous basis, it is not the case and often responds to a centralized change.

4.1.2 Finance

Finance is discussed along four sub-elements, i.e., how is finance for education structured, how is financing for teachers structured, how is finance for other education inputs structured, and where and to what extent is discretion for finance in education distributed throughout the system? We primarily aligned this element for access with a few characteristics of selection. Due to the nature of the compact relationship, we discuss this element concerning public/government-aided schools.

How is finance for education structured: Financing decisions for each fiscal year are guided by a budget strategy that is drawn following national priorities as enshrined in national strategic plans like the National Development Plans (NDPs). The budget strategy lays down country priorities and detailed interventions for each year. At this point, the MoFPED determines indicative fiscal ceilings for the financial year. Once the different education entities receive the fiscal ceilings, they prepare budget framework papers detailing their allocations and work plans in line with national priorities. As in the recent budget strategy documents, financing decisions for the primary education cycle have mostly been justified regarding access and expansion with financing

priorities, such as enhancing staffing levels to improve teacher-pupil ratios and automatic promotion. Priorities/policy pronouncements, e.g. presidential directives, often guide financing decisions that have been geared towards increasing access in the recent past. For example, the directive on having a public primary school per parish in the strategic guidelines and directives for the term 2016 to 2021.

Additionally, in allocations to the local governments under the education budget, primary education non-wage recurrent allocations prioritize the number of learners in primary school (75% in FY2018/19, 90% in FY2019/20, and FY2020/21), taking the largest share in the grant allocation formula, followed by the population of school going age (15% in FY2018/19) and performance metrics like percentage of children passing PLE grade 1 to 3 (6% in FY2018/19, 2019/20 and FY2020/21) where local governments with lower performance are given more to help them catch up with higher performing local governments (National Budget Framework Papers FY2018/19, FY2019/20, FY2020/21). The above discussion suggests that this sub-element is largely aligned for access, with a few elements aligned for selection.

How is financing for teachers structured: This sub-element is generally aligned for access as salaries for primary education teachers are determined according to a salary scheme with four scales, i.e., U7, U6, U5, and U4. New entrants referred to as education assistants (Grade III teachers) teachers fall under the U7 salary scale (UGX 499,684 - 568,166), senior education assistants under U6 (UGX 605,100 - 613,485), deputy head teachers in U5 (UGX 662,165-773,952) while head teachers are in U4 (UGX 777,512 - 980,211). The above compensation scheme is not responsive to attracting, retaining, and motivating quality teaching, as evidenced by the rampant teacher strikes in recent years because of poor pay, high teacher absenteeism, and churning of the teaching profession.

How is finance for other education inputs structured?

Like finance for teachers, finance for other education inputs is aligned for access. As highlighted in previous discussions, financing decisions for non-wage are usually based on enrolments. The largest proportion of non-wage spending goes to financing inputs, such as the construction and renovation of school facilities and the supply of teaching materials. A significant portion of the development budget comes from development partners through donations and

grants.

Where and to what extent is discretion for finance in education distributed throughout the system? At each level in the budgeting process, distinct entities have discretion over the budgeting decision and allocation. However, this is with guidance from the national development plans and strategic priorities as stated in the budget strategy produced each financial year by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The final approval of fiscal allocations, as indicated in the compiled national budget framework paper and the final budget, rests with the cabinet and the parliament. However, whereas there is some discretion at different levels, they usually make financing decisions at the top because of limited resources.

4.1.3 Information

The information element in the compact relationship comprises three sub-elements: how information for education is structured, how the system determines that education is of sufficient quality, and what information they include in the system EMIS. This element is generally aligned for both access and selection.

How is information for education structured: This sub-element covers the nature of the information received by the executive or fiduciary authorities on the performance of education authorities. It further captures the regularity, reliability, and relevance of such information. Generally, this sub-element is aligned for access and selection. This is because there is a focus on information pertaining to enrolment rates, transition, completion, and pass rates, especially in the high-stakes primary Leaving examinations, as produced in unique documents like the National Budget Framework Papers. As evidenced in the annual school census, there is a focus on thin inputs, such as the total number of schools and infrastructure like the classrooms and toilets. Specifically, concerning the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, MoES provides information on the utilization of funds as per the annual budget allocations, mainly through regular semi-annual and annual budget performance reports.

How does the system determine that education is of sufficient quality? At the primary level, quality is measured by a pupil's literacy, numeracy, and life skills. This is

usually measured through the pupil's performance on the examinable subjects at the national examinations. Further still, quality is often measured using thin input indicators such as enrolment rate, completion rate, pupil/teacher ratio, and teachers' qualifications. Hence, like the previous sub-element, this sub-element is aligned for access and selection.

What information is included in the EMIS system? MoES maintains an [EMIS](#) that captures data on key performance indicators of the education sector. These include teachers, pupils, infrastructure, institutions, school finances, and audit and school inspection information. Data from the EMIS is

used to produce outputs such as annual statistical abstracts, fact sheets, and booklets. Most of the data that feeds into the EMIS is generated through the annual schools census that focuses on basic data used especially for planning (especially budgeting), policy analysis, development, and decision-making.

4.2 Management relationship

The management relationship is mainly aligned for access and selection with a few components of patronage/self-interest, as summarized in table 2 below. A detailed discussion of each element follows after table 2.

Table 2 Summary of the key findings in the Management relationship

Element	Sub-element	Key findings
Delegation	High-level targets	- The education system (MoES) prioritizes enrolments, retention, progression, completion, and academic performance. - NCDC requires schools to implement the curriculum as designed for content mastery. - UNEB expects schools to prepare and present pupils for exams.
	Alignment of the curriculum to the learning levels of pupils	- The different curricula are, by design, aligned with the learning levels of pupils. However, in implementation, the curricula are deemed overly ambitious and theoretical. - Curriculum implementation prioritizes curriculum completion rather than content mastery and comprehension.
	Local discretion granted to schools or teachers	- Public schools have limited discretion over the mode of instruction, mainly stemming from limited resources. - In private schools, there is considerable flexibility to allow teachers to change their mode of instruction for better academic performance.
Finance	How is financing for teachers structured?	- In public schools, the payment of primary teachers follows a salary scheme determined by the public service commission. - In private schools, teachers are paid mainly according to their pupils' academic performance. Others include existing staffing gaps, experience and teacher qualifications.
	How is finance for other education inputs structured?	Financing decisions for now-wage are usually based on enrolment
	Centralization versus local autonomy in allocating funds	- School leaders in public schools are involved in the lower level of planning for central funds. - There is some discretion as school leaders can reallocate funds across budget lines apart from the scholastic materials and co-curricular activities budget lines.
	Accounts versus accounting	- Teachers in public schools are hired to close the existing staffing gaps - They put limited attention on financing teachers to achieve learning objectives in schools.

Support	Quality of the instructional materials	• They supply instructional materials in inadequate quantities save for some public schools, especially in the central urban regions with a pupil-textbook ratio of 1:1; some materials have shallow content and are deemed irrelevant. • Supply is marred by distributional errors, especially for the thematic curriculum materials in local languages. • Commercialization of the printing and distribution of instructional materials has further compromised the quality of the materials. • Schools lack training on using instructional material, primarily because of inadequate resources.
	Coherence between the instructional materials/ training and other design elements:	• The instructional materials provided through the official government channels are aligned with the curriculum, examinations, and students' learning levels, unlike those supplied solely by private entities. • An inevitable mismatch is because of some materials' vocabulary is difficult for learners to interpret.
	Form of instructional materials and teacher training	• In-service training in public schools is often irregular and in response to a centralized change, while in private schools, it is usually based on a needs assessment. • There are no specialized pre-service requirements for the different primary school levels, i.e., one only needs a grade three certificate.
	Delivery of teacher training	• In-service training typically follows a cascade model. • Pre-service training is mainly theoretical, with only three months of teaching practice out of the two years of study. • In public schools, over 70% of teachers do not receive supervision from school leaders.
Information	Most critical information sought by MoES from schools.	• Most critical information relates to pupil enrolment and attendance, inputs such as school infrastructure, staff attendance, lesson plans, and schemes of work.
	Exam Purpose	• To prepare learners for the high stake PLE exams, encourage competition, and test memorization of content for progression. • Sometimes to help poor performers through remedial lessons and to test and revise teaching methods.
	Exam Design (Exam-curriculum alignment)	• Generally, due to the proliferation of private exam bureaus, exams are often misaligned with the curriculum and focus on lower-order levels of cognitive demand.
	Accounts Vs Accounting for school leadership and teachers	• Good teaching in school is mainly judged on the pupil's academic performance, especially in the PLE exams. • Education authorities judge good school leadership based on school maintenance and functionality (proper utilization of funds, school hygiene, school enrolment).
	Information use	• They often use the information on exams for the improvement of performance, teacher placement i.e., transfers, promotion, or demotion, and evaluating teaching methods.
Motivation	Intrinsic motivation	• Teaching is a low-status profession characterized by low pay and is often joined as a last resort. • An overwhelming majority of teachers would prefer administrative to teaching roles because of higher pay, prestige, less work burden, etc.
	Extrinsic motivation	• Teacher career structures (hiring, firing, placement, appraisal, promotion, etc.) are mainly determined by the performance of pupils, qualifications, and experience. • Tribalism and corruption feature regarding teacher career structures in public schools.

4.2.1 Delegation

The delegation element under management comprises four elements that cover the different aspects of the education system and is generally aligned for access with some elements of selection and learning. The elements include high-level targets, curriculum alignment to pupils' learning levels, the most critical responsibilities, and the local discretion granted to schools or teachers.

High-level targets: This sub-element examines the education system priorities. More succinctly, it seeks to understand what education authorities require from schools and teachers and what they aim to achieve. Generally, the education system prioritizes enrolment and retention, i.e., keeping children longer in school, especially the girl child, and academic performance measured by exam scores, progression, and completion rates. Additionally, NCDC expects schools and teachers to implement the curriculum as subscribed to exhibit academic excellence measured through marks. Specifically, different schools prioritize different targets. For instance, while private schools are aligned for selection, our analysis shows that government-owned schools are mostly aligned for access. Private schools aim to ensure the best performance, especially at Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Here, schools prioritize achieving the highest number of students in division one to attract more clients, as noted by a school headteacher in one workshop:

“For private schools, this is business, and clients are interested in excellent results, and that’s what we aim to give them. Every parent wants to see their child in first grade.”

In addition, even the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) and the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) expect schools to present and register learners who can pass and excel in their examinations. On the other hand, the majority of public schools are interested in enrollment (aligned for access). We mainly attributed this to the fact that funds given to schools depending on the number of pupils in that school, meaning that the more the number, the bigger the budget, regardless of whether the school can ensure learning. Additionally, public schools are mandated to enroll all children to provide access for all, as stipulated in the 1997 UPE Policy. As a result, this has increased access

over the years but undermined the quality of learning.

Notably, some traces of learning exist in a few schools that look beyond numbers and good grades but try to build the talent and skills of children. This is done through special programs such as sports days, career days and the application of hands-on skills, among other indicators of learning.

Alignment of the curriculum to the learning levels of pupils: This sub-element covers areas pertaining to the appropriateness and quality of the curriculum. The primary curriculum for Uganda is divided into three: the thematic curriculum for Primary one to Primary three, the transition curriculum for Primary four and the upper curriculum for Primary five to Primary seven. Due to COVID-19, schools closed for almost two years, so an abridged curriculum was introduced to cover lost learning. A detailed discussion of each regarding its appropriateness and quality follows.

Generally, the thematic curriculum exhibits some learning elements and is deemed appropriate for learners because it emphasizes competencies such as reading, writing, and listening, which are key for learners at that level. The curriculum encourages learning in themes, is child-centred, and encourages teaching in mother languages. Learning in themes helps children learn from the known to the unknown, and the themes are based on the environment, allowing learners to continue learning outside the classroom. However, implementation challenges arise, making this sub-element more aligned toward access. Some challenges stem from the recommended language of instruction (the local language of that location), which often conflicts with parents' demands as they want their children to speak English.

Some respondents also highlighted that, whereas theme-based learning is appropriate for learners, the curriculum currently involves handling too many themes beyond the learners' capacity. Moreover, these themes are handled by the same teacher, which is very boring for both teachers and learners and is very cumbersome to the teacher, given the high enrolment rate, especially in public schools. Additionally, some English words do not have a local language equivalent; hence, especially in urban areas and in private schools, English is used as the mode of instruction, and they teach the local language as a subject.

Regarding the transition curriculum, stakeholders revealed it is inappropriate and over-ambitious because the learners find it difficult to quickly switch from the local language, a medium of instruction in lower primary, to English. Learners find subjects strange as they are used to themes in lower primary. This makes the subjects complex and challenging, leading to high dropouts and repetition in this class. Relatedly, teachers shun teaching Primary four and opt for higher classes because they also do not understand the transition curriculum quite well. Indeed, stakeholders indicated that primary four is the most challenging class because of the confusion faced by learners affecting learning outcomes.

Whereas we deemed the upper curriculum appropriate, they pointed it out that it is too theoretical and does not adequately prepare learners to face real-world life after school. Primary teacher noted:

“In upper primary, there is no learning and teaching, just drilling of learners to pass exams.”

While the content of the abridged curriculum is rich and appropriate for all learners to develop critical competencies and cover up for what they missed during the COVID-19-induced lockdown, its delivery and implementation are still lacking. The gaps in the delivery arise from the inability to pilot it before they rolled it out in school, lack of adequate training for the implementers, and limited lesson time. Respondents deem the workload too heavy to cover in the recommended 40-minute lessons, and it is not practical given the high school enrolment rates. This has forced some teachers to ignore some important content. Moreover, the sequencing of topics sometimes does not flow, and learners cannot interpret most of the content since most topics are new.

Overall, school leaders and teachers indicated that curriculum completion, as opposed to learners understanding the concepts, is a key focus area for most schools in Uganda. This mainly stems from the pressures of the summative-based assessment that make schools more focused on exam scores. Additionally, extra pressure arises as teachers are often assessed on timely syllabus completion.

Centralization vs local autonomy: local discretion granted to schools or teachers: This sub-element captures the discussion around schools or teachers’ ability to choose

a mode of instruction or pedagogical techniques that best suit their pupils’ needs with system-wide learning goals and expectations. Discussions revealed that public schools have limited discretion over the mode of instruction used in classrooms. Teachers are expected to teach following the methods learned from teacher colleges and/or stipulated in the curriculum. In private schools, teachers have more freedom and are allowed to be innovative as long as the mode of instruction leads to good performance for every learner.

4.2.2 Finance

The finance design element under the management relationship is discussed in four components: how teachers and school inputs are financed and the level of autonomy of schools in allocating resources. The finance element is primarily aligned for access in public schools and selection in private schools. Last, the section examines the extent to which the financing of teachers is aligned with learning goals in schools.

How teachers are financed: This sub-element exhibits elements of selection and access based on the nature of the schools. Generally, the financing of teachers in private schools is aligned for selection as salaries mainly aim at ensuring learners get higher exam scores. In private schools, performing learners (based on exam scores) is the most considered factor in determining teachers’ salaries. For instance, at the release of Primary Level examinations, teachers are rewarded financially according to the number of distinctions obtained as a way of motivating/ rewarding their outstanding performance. Apart from academic performance, school directors also consider the existing staffing gaps, bargaining power of the teacher (usually determined by performance at the previous schools), experience, and teacher qualifications, among others. Except in a few private church-based schools, head teachers have limited or no say on their teachers’ salaries. This is because private schools are formed as profit-making entities by the school owner.

In government-aided schools, they pay teachers based on the salary structure set by the public service commission as laid out in the compact relationship. However, the scheme of service is rigid and not responsive to changes in teachers’ qualifications. For instance, head teachers take a long time to be confirmed as senior education officers and remain in

acting capacities for quite a long period. Similarly, teachers who upgrade their qualifications take a long time (an average of seven years) to get promoted. This, therefore, discourages teachers from going for further studies to improve their pedagogical training that would promote learning in schools. It is also important to note that teacher remuneration has little relationship with education goals and is based on years in service. The Government also provides a hard-to-reach allowance (20 percent of the gross salary) to teachers who work in schools in hard-to-reach rural areas.

Besides salaries, some public schools pay allowances to the teachers depending on the remedial lessons administered. Despite these payments, teachers were unanimously unsatisfied with their profession due to low pay compared to other careers. This has affected their teaching morale, resulting in country-wide strikes and demonstrations through their umbrella body UNATU (Uganda National Teachers Union). Owing to this low pay, the teaching profession is not well respected in society, contrary to the times in the past when teachers were well remunerated, built good houses, and took their children to excellent schools. To supplement their incomes, teachers have now taken on side jobs such as retail business, farming, and boda-bodas; however, this affects the time to teach learners in class effectively. Overall, the financing of teachers in public schools is aligned for access.

How inputs are financed: In public schools, school inputs (scholastic materials, classrooms) are financed based on school enrolments and parents' contributions. However, the government system does not capture real-time enrolments in schools even when schools in time submit enrolment data. As such, they provide limited funds to the schools since releases are based on past and outdated enrolment data. The capitation fund released per pupil is relatively low to finance all the learning needs of children in school. Specifically, the government releases only UGX 20,000 (USD 5) per child annually, which translates to UGX 6,666 (USD 1.7) per term. Children just come to school but lack basic scholastic materials to support learning. Relatedly, school infrastructure in public schools is funded by the government through the development facility grant. However, the release of this fund from the central government is irregular. For instance, a school can take five years without receiving that fund. This is because they give this fund to schools with an enormous deficit of facilities. Under this arrangement,

District education authorities contract the construction services, whereas the school management repairs the facilities. Overall, the financing of school inputs in public schools in Uganda is aligned for access given that it is based on school enrolments so that all schools can attain just the bare minimum standards.

Centralization vs local autonomy – allocating funds:

Regarding the schools' discretion in the planning and budget allocation process, school managers and teachers are involved in the planning and budget process of the public funds to the school. The school capitation grant released centrally by the government is based on school enrolment. More succinctly, teachers make up the finance committee which the Deputy Headteacher chairs, while the Headteacher is the ex-official of the committee. This arrangement holds headteachers accountable for spending the centrally released school funds and involve the school staff in the planning process. The finance committee sits every term to make a costed budget of items needed in the school. These items can be classified into five broad categories i.e., administration, management, co-curricular activities, scholastic materials, and contingency. The proposed budget is then submitted to the school management committee that comprises the chairperson (parents), Secretary (Headteacher), community, and opinion leaders. SMC then approves the budget with some revisions where necessary. Upon approval, they then used the budget as a working instrument to guide the accounting officer (headteacher) to make expenditures on behalf of the school management. Broadly, the capitation grant funds don't consider special needs for pupils with disabilities and targeted considerations for girls. However, in some schools, management can use the contingency vote to cater to such requirements. The school managers also have considerable discretion to move funds from one budget vote to another; however, scholastic materials and co-curricular cannot be reallocated to other budget votes. The sub-element is aligned for selection because head teachers exercise given autonomy to reallocate resources over a limited scope of the school budget. School managers are involved at the lower level of planning and budgeting, where most of the financial decisions are already determined.

Accounts versus accounting: Regarding the accounting vis-à-vis accounts component, teachers in public schools are hired to close the existing staffing gaps in the education sector. For instance, the ministry recruits teachers based

on quantitative ratios such as the Pupil-teacher and Pupil-classroom ratios in schools. They put limited attention on financing teachers to achieve learning objectives in schools. The rigid and meagre salary structure partly reflects this.

4.2.3 Support

The support element is composed of four sub-elements covering different aspects of the education system. These aspects cover the quality of the instructional materials, coherence between the instructional materials/ training on the same and other design elements, the form of instructional materials and teacher training, and delivery of teacher training. The support element is mostly aligned for access.

Quality of the instructional materials: This sub-element covers areas pertaining to the accessibility, quantity, and ability to modify instructional materials like textbooks and teacher guides. It also examines the nature of training on instructional materials. This sub-element is aligned for access. Unlike private schools, the government, through its distinct entities, provides instructional materials to government schools. However, the respondents noted that they are usually offered instructional materials in inadequate quantities. This is mainly because as much as the distribution of such materials is based on the enrolments, it doesn't consider current enrolments because of the gap in updating such information. One cited a case where a school of 600 pupils was given two textbooks.

Moreover, the respondents indicated that some of the recommended textbooks have shallow content and are irrelevant since relevant stakeholders like the district education authorities and schools were not consulted in developing and deciding which materials to supply. Distribution errors render instructional materials irrelevant. For instance, cases in Northern Uganda where textbooks are delivered to the wrong schools where a distinct language is used. For example, books meant for Lira schools where Langi is used were delivered to Acholi schools. Another example is where Islamic textbooks are delivered to a Christian school and vice versa. Respondents also noted that some languages, especially for minority groups, are not considered when designing instructional materials. This is the case for the "Lubuisi" in Bundibugyo district.

They also pinpointed commercialization of the printing and distribution of instructional materials as the reason for the compromised quality owing to limited regulation and control of private entities while developing learning materials. This brings in some aspects of patronage as members pointed out examples of publishers such as Macmillan, and Rorash educational publishers, among others, that produce poor quality textbooks and further indicated that some of these publishing companies are owned by government officials who influence the procurement process of distributing learning materials.

It is worth noting that there are also some aspects of learning. For instance, in some districts, especially in the Central urban regions, they provide public schools with enough good-quality learning materials to enable teachers to implement the curriculum. Notably, the pupil-textbook ratio in these schools is 1:1, allowing the learners to follow through with this content during lessons.

Regarding the training on the use of instructional materials, the majority noted that there is no training on the use of instructional materials, and the few who received training cited that this was inadequate and typically follows a cascade model where a few teachers are trained and charged with the responsibility of training others. The Instructional Materials Unit at the Ministry of Education and Sports cited that there are inadequate resources to organize training and highlighted that there has not been training in instructional materials distributed to schools since 2005/2006.

Coherence between the instructional materials/ training and other design elements:

This looks at the alignment between the training/instructional materials with other elements, such as the curriculum, exams, and students' learning levels. Primarily, the instructional materials provided through the official government channels are aligned with the curriculum, examinations, and students' learning levels. The Instructional Materials Unit at the MoES follows a stringent quality control process in developing instructional materials, and the curriculum produced by the NCDC purely guides this. However, some cases were cited where content on the curriculum was left out of the instructional materials supplied. To an extent, this is attributed to the fact that as opposed to pre-qualifying a maximum of five textbooks for distribution to schools as required, where issues of missing content in one can be met by using another textbook, one book (usually

the lower-priced one) is now chosen for supply to schools because of limited financial resources. We highlighted some cases of mismatch between the instructional material and student learning levels, as the vocabulary used in some instructional materials is sometimes tricky for learners to interpret. There are cases of private supplies of instructional materials that are not regulated by the MoES and end up producing material that is misaligned with the curriculum, examinations, and students' learning levels.

Form of instructional materials and teacher training:

This covers in-service training, the nature of pre-service qualifications, and school/classroom discretion over instructional materials. The sub-element is aligned for access, as shown in the ensuing discussion. The government typically organises in-service training for public schools, often in response to a centralized change, like new policies or curriculum change. For instance, with the outbreak of COVID-19, teachers were trained on handling learners during the post-pandemic situation era. However, in-service trainings are irregularly conducted because of limited central funding for the capacity development component. On the contrary, in some private schools, especially in the central region, in-service training exhibits learning elements as it is conducted based on a needs assessment of teachers to enable them to implement the curriculum and acquire pedagogical skills to deliver lessons.

Concerning the pre-service qualifications, the required qualifications to enter the primary teaching profession are generally standardized. This is the grade three certificate acquired after completing the first level of training at the primary teacher colleges. In a nutshell, there are no specialized pre-service requirements for the different levels of primary school or different subjects. This is regardless of whether one will teach lower or upper primary, science or arts subjects.

Delivery of teacher training: This covers areas concerning the in-service and pre-service training approaches and professional accountability. It is, to a large extent, split between selection and access. With respect to the in-service training, this follows a cascade model because of inadequate resources. With this model, a few representatives are trained on a program of interest, like a new curriculum launch, and then charged with training others. The challenge is that in some schools, no one is trained or only one teacher

is trained who, if transferred to another school, the school remains with no trained teacher for that program.

The pre-service training for primary school teachers is typically organized: The course lasts two years. In the first year, usually at the beginning, teacher trainees typically have a month of child study where they visit schools and get an understanding of children's cognitive or psycho-social development. They then have two rounds of teaching practice, each lasting one month, one called semi-final teaching practice at the beginning of the second year of study and the other called the last teaching practice that happens towards the end of the second year. Therefore, there are three months of practical training for the two years spent in the course. Teachers noted that the time allocated to practical training is not enough given the amount of work to be done, such as preparing schemes of work, lesson plans, and instructional materials.

In a nutshell, it was noted that because of limited time and funding allocated for pre-service training, the quality of teachers going out to practice the teaching profession is poor (some teachers called them "half-baked teachers"). Most of the time, teachers leave the teacher training colleges without understanding the basic professional knowledge, such as developing the schemes of work. In addition, it was showed that the subjects offered in the teacher training colleges are too many (over 13 subjects). These involve a lot of revision of what was covered at the secondary level, especially for science subjects. Some teachers in the host schools of the training don't provide teaching opportunities to the student teachers and frequently crush them for fear of taking up their jobs. This also affects the quality of the pre-service training.

There were a few differences between government, and private schools regarding professional accountability. In government schools, teachers noted that about 70 percent of teachers do not receive supervision from school leaders. All the leaders usually ask for are the schemes of work and lesson plans without supervising what goes on in class. In contrast, teachers from private schools noted that school leaders often supervise because of external pressures from school owners and parents.

4.2.4 Information

Information, as a design element, details the indicators

that the principal uses to measure how well the agent has performed their tasks. Under the management relationship, the design element comprises the following sub-elements: Education Management Information System (EMIS), Exams purpose, Exam design (curriculum-exam alignment), Accounts Vs accounting for school leaders and teachers, and Information use. The information element is aligned for both access and selection with some learning features, as explained below.

Most critical information sought by MoES from schools:

Under this sub-element, we sought to understand the most critical information that the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) sought from schools across the different regions. The study findings indicate that, through school inspections, the ministry mainly focuses on the following information:

Student enrollment and attendance in the school. Under this, inspectors are usually interested in the number of girls and boys per class and their attendance rate. Inspectors examine learners' attendance records to get a feel of absenteeism and dropout rates.

Other inputs, such as school infrastructure, especially the classrooms, and sanitary facilities like toilets/latrine stances, are given attention during school visits. Respondents indicated that such information is key since it is a requirement for every school to have these facilities, and without them, it is against the law to have the school running.

According to the inspectors, staff attendance, lesson plans, and schemes of work records are among the most required in-class information. This is because, for learning to take place, not only is a teacher's presence key but also how prepared he/she is to teach. Notably, while such information is critical for the ministry to understand how classes are conducted/what takes place inside the classroom, respondents in most regions indicated that inspectors only ask about the availability of lesson plans and schemes of work. Very few of them get to see the actual documents, let alone determine whether teachers use them appropriately. A headteacher noted:

"Most inspectors come with an inspection guide with items they should ask about already listed. But the detail of determining whether an ongoing lesson is as per the lesson plan is still missing. In most schools, inspectors

only stop at the head teachers' office, and no the on-ground verification is done to ensure that all the items on the inspection guide are present."

They cited several challenges in the inspection process, which resulted in the highlighted inadequate/haphazard inspection and, sometimes, no inspection at all in some schools. For example, the limited facilitation offered to inspectors, and the small number of inspectors per region are not commensurate with the number of schools. Additionally, there are corrupt tendencies of private school owners who offer money to inspectors for a good inspection report about their schools.

Indeed, it was noted that poor school inspection could be attributed to the reason behind the inspection. For instance, inspectors use some inspections as a source of money, as they visit particular schools only when a monetary payment is expected from the school leaders. Additionally, some visits aim at malicious intentions against a particular staff member. In such a case, they do inspections to target a particular teacher/head teacher so that they can identify a culpable concern that makes a transfer for such a person becomes inevitable.

Nonetheless, in very few instances (for example, in Buhweju district in western Uganda), respondents noted inspectors do detailed inspections, and they provide inspection reports. The respondents noted that the District Education Officer of Buhweju ensures that proper inspection is done mainly for political reasons. Poor school performance could cause his failure to get into the next term in office since education is one of the key contributions of a politician in Buhweju district. This sub-element of information confirms that there is an alignment between access and patronage in Uganda's education sector.

Exam Purpose: Different stakeholders revealed that the main reason for administering exams is to prepare learners for high stake exams at the end of the primary cycle. As earlier noted, the purpose of frequent examinations, which is common in private schools, is to get learners accustomed to the exams that are expected to be set in PLE, i.e., to understand the question approach.

Exams also aim to encourage competition among learners in the same class. This is done by ranking learners according

to their performance and allocating them to streams according to their performance. For example, a stream for cream (top performers) and a stream for the average. The study findings indicate that they do this so that learners who are not performing well can look up to their counterparts who have high exam scores so that they can join their streams in the subsequent term.

Furthermore, our results reveal that they do specific exams in schools to test memorization of content. For instance, the beginning of Term exams measures the learners' ability to retain the information they were taught during the previous term. Exams are also used to determine whether a learner is ready for the next class, should repeat the class, or be pushed to a lower class.

We also identified some traces of learning. In some schools, based on performance in a particular subject, they catered to the poor performers through remedial lessons, more revisions, and counseling to perform better in upcoming exams. In other instances, exams are used to test different teaching methods, identify areas of weakness among learners and devise means of addressing them. For example, they could advise a learner to repeat a class, seek parents' intervention in the learner's academic performance, employ a resource person from another school, reallocate teachers or opt for co-teaching to boost exam scores. This still points to an alignment for selection, and to a small extent, alignment for learning as consideration is given to the poor performers in some schools.

Exam Design (Exam-curriculum alignment): As previously discussed, many curricula run concurrently in the primary cycle. Interestingly, each of the above curricula was described as "only good on paper". This implies that, while the content of the curricula is excellent and meant to bring up holistic learners, its applicability is still lacking because of several reasons, such as inadequate training of teachers on curriculum delivery and insufficient copies provided by the ministry to the schools, among others. Respondents indicated that, while the abridged curriculum encourages learners' formative assessment, all schools are still using summative assessments through administering termly exams because of pressures from parents. The kind of exams administered to learners at the primary level is not properly aligned with the curriculum. A head teacher noted:

"The curriculum requires us to give exams to learners only at the end of the year, not on a term basis. However, termly exams are the only way of providing accountability to parents. End-of-term exams are the only way to prove to parents that learning has been taking place at school. So we still give termly exams even when the curriculum says otherwise".

The exams that learners are subjected to are not in line with syllabus coverage or topic alignment as per the curriculum. This is because they have left the setting of exams to the private sector. Public schools also adopted using private examination bureaus in order to compete favorably with their private counterparts. Private exam-setting bureaus such as Prime and Sipro set exams without knowledge of how far the teachers have gone regarding syllabus coverage. The respondents pointed out that questions from topics that are supposed to be covered in the third term are sometimes set in the second or first term, which results in high failure rates. These examinations rarely balance out questions and focus more on the lower-order levels of cognitive demand, i.e., the knowledge level, which involves memorization other than comprehension. This points to an alignment for access for this sub-element.

Regarding the lower primary curriculum, stakeholders indicated that there are incoherences in the language recommended by the curriculum (local languages) and English being the dominant language of instruction, especially in most private schools and the most preferred by most parents. While the lower primary curriculum recommends using respective local languages when teaching, the exams are set in English. Parents consider their children's ability to use English as an indicator of learning. Worse still, some children use English back at home and in pre-primary and transitioning to local languages when they join primary one makes implementing the curriculum difficult. The multi-lingual classes worsened this, where the entire class cannot understand one local language as noted by a teacher:

"A class can have a mixture of over five tribes. Teaching such a class would require using one common language, and we resort to using English to deliver a curriculum that emphasizes teaching in local languages."

Accounts Vs Accounting for school leadership and teachers: This sub-element is largely aligned for selection

and access. It examines the basis upon which school leadership and teacher performance are evaluated. The study findings reveal that good teaching and school leadership is mainly judged by the school's performance, especially in high stake exams (PLE).

Regarding teachers, they evaluate their performance based on how the subject they teach is performed at PLE (for candidate classes) and performance in term exams for lower classes. It was also noted that other indicators, such as attendance records, lesson plans, schemes of work, classroom, and time management might be considered during their appraisals. However, the latter indicators are only given attention when pupils are not performing well in a particular subject for which the teacher is responsible. In some instances, teachers' performance is judged on duties or activities assigned to them, for example, the week when a teacher is on duty, a class teacher, among others.

Regarding school leadership, in addition to the schools' performance in PLE, school leaders are also judged based on their ability to manage the available financial resources, the presence of functional committees such as the Parent-Teacher Association and the School Management Committee, security of the school, hygiene and sanitation, and discipline/conduct of the learners, among others.

Information Use: As earlier mentioned, learners' performance is at the forefront of every decision made in all schools. Indeed, the majority of information collected from school's aims at deciding improvement in performance in PLE. For example, stakeholders reported that a head teacher could be transferred from one school to another based on the number of distinctions they can generate from PLE exams. Teacher placement, demotion, promotion, and teaching methods are some decisions implemented in most schools to improve grades obtained in national exams. Good teaching (based on exam scores) is rewarded in most schools, especially private ones. This points to the alignment for selection that was earlier pointed out.

Information from inspection reports, annual school census, and Education statistical abstracts is mainly used for planning purposes. The MoES draws on such information especially when making budget allocation decisions.

4.2.5 Motivation

This design element exhibits characteristics of alignment with access, selection, and patronage. The design element contains two sub-elements that cover intrinsic and extrinsic motivation issues. Intrinsic motivation mostly focuses on the teacher's professional status, whereas extrinsic motivation focuses on factors that influence the teacher's career advancement and job security.

Intrinsic motivation: Overall, this sub-element is aligned toward selection and access. Teaching is considered a low-status job as it has low rewards, often joined as a last resort because of financial constraints, poor academic performance, and family influences. The teaching profession is primarily disrespected in the community. Unlike in the past, when the teaching profession was more rewarding, recruitment of poor performers has affected the quality of teaching and learning, and the social acceptability of the profession has deteriorated. However, a few teachers joined the profession as a calling because they admired teachers and viewed them as custodians of knowledge, hence doing it out of passion.

On the choice between administrative and teaching positions, an overwhelming number of school leaders and teachers noted that administrative positions such as being a head teacher are more desirable than teaching positions because of the less workload with higher remuneration, more respect, ability to delegate responsibilities, given priority in case of training, among others. This further highlights the low motivation levels in the teaching profession at the primary level.

Extrinsic motivation: This sub-element covers issues about teachers' career structures. This includes entry, exit, placement, appraisal, and promotion. Extrinsic motivation fits three different alignments, i.e., selection, access, and patronage. However, with some differences between government and private schools. Decisions regarding teacher career structures are usually based on performance, qualification, and experience; however, with varying degrees for government and private schools. Whereas in government schools, those mentioned above are considered, respondents pointed out certain characteristics of patronage, which often override the above factors. These included elements of politics, tribalism, and corruption. For example,

increasingly, especially with the decentralization of teacher hiring to the district level, we are observing elements of patronage/special interest where the relationship with key hiring stakeholders is put ahead of qualifications and merit when hiring, promoting, and placing teachers.

The enrolments and the number of years that the teacher has spent in a certain school were key emerging determinants of teacher career structures in government schools, espousing alignment for access. Hiring, promotion, and firing of teachers in private schools mainly depend on performance/exam

scores obtained by learners, especially in Primary Leaving Examinations/former schools of teaching. In addition, there is a focus on the budget in making such decisions pointing to the fact that extrinsic motivation in private schools is mainly aligned for selection.

4.3 Voice and Choice relationship

The voice and choice relationship depicts components of both access and selection, as summarized in table 3 below and discussed in the following sections.

Table 3 Summary of the key findings in the Voice and Choice relationship

Element	Sub-element ¹	Key findings
Delegation	What do parents want?	- Parents prioritise academic performance for private and public schools, especially in high-stakes exams, when choosing schools for their children. - Additionally, parents look at school dues, especially in private schools, proximity to the school, and the school's physical appearance, etc.
	Do parents play a role in school management and governance?	- The involvement of parents depends on the school. Voice is stronger in public schools because of functioning school governing bodies, such as PTAs and SMCs than in private schools. - Parents are also involved more in school management than in governance.
	Whose voice? To what degree is there internal community cohesion?	- In schools where PTAs and SMCs exist and are functional, these bodies do not adequately represent the voices of the majority. - They also reflected this in the criteria for choosing representatives on these bodies, which include parents' education level, socioeconomic status, and competence levels.
Finance	Does the local level have some discretion over financing for education?	- Parents in public schools have a weaker voice on the spending of capitation grants because of limited information about these funds. - Parents in public schools only follow up on private contributions from the PTA fund. - In private schools, parents do not have any say regarding the school fees they pay, especially if their children get high exam scores.
	What information is used to inform financing decisions?	- Parents prioritize financing learners' general welfare in public schools, such as feeding, sanitary facilities, etc. - In private schools, financing decisions made by parents aim to improve children's performance.
Information	Do standardized exams provide regular, reliable, relevant information on learning?	- A termly report is the primary information schools provide to parents to show that learning is taking place. - Parents put the most emphasis on exam scores from different sets of exams (beginning and End of the term) in the reports. - However, such scores are unreliable because of cheating tendencies among schools, and most parents also agree that a mark is not a relevant measure of learning.
	Beyond standardized exams, do families get other accounts of whether their child is learning?	- Weekly and monthly exams are administered to learners, especially in private schools and results from the same are presented to parents on special school days such as visitation days. - Some traces of learning, e.g., participation in co-curricular activities, speech days, and talent exhibition days, were reported, especially in public schools where parents demand them.
Motivation	Do parents have some discretion over teacher career structures?	- In public schools, parents have no say in teacher hiring, as this is the responsibility of the education service commission. Parents have some say in teacher transfer and discipline. - In private schools, voice has a minor role regarding teacher career structures as the directors' decision overpowers all the rest.
	What information is used to inform judgments about school leadership/school choice?	- In private and government schools, decisions taken by parents/communities regarding teacher careers are mainly based on learners' performance in P.L.E. - In rural schools, such decisions may be based on teachers' discipline. - Other information includes respect for the teacher/ headteacher in the community, enrolment, teacher attendance, children's oratory skills etc.

¹ Support is not included in the voice and choice relationship because parents do not have the technical competencies to offer the kind of support in the form of in-service and pre-service training that teachers need to carry out their tasks.

4.3.1 Delegation

The element of delegation under voice and choice is comprised of three sub-elements. These cover perspectives of what parents want, if the bureaucracy allows a voice in school governance and management, and to what degree there is internal community cohesion. This design element is aligned for selection to a large extent.

What do parents want? This sub-element examines what parents base on to evaluate the quality and choose schools for their children. From our discussions with parents and other stakeholders, this is primarily aligned for selection. This is because parents mainly prioritize academic performance. They look at how a school has been performing in PLE over the years when choosing schools for their children. Some parents also look at the cost of education in terms of how much school fees are, but in most cases, if a school is performing well, especially in private schools, parents will pay any amount. On the other hand, parents from public schools are satisfied with their children going to school but aim to have their children perform in the best way they can.

Voice and choice are also aligned for access sometimes. For example, some parents prioritize the proximity of the school from home and its physical appearance, such as classrooms, sanitary facilities, fences, etc. In contrast, to some parents, large numbers enrolled in a particular school imply that the school is doing well and thus can base their choices on such factors.

Do parents play a role in school management and governance? This sub-element covers parents' participation in school governance and management. Findings show that involvement in governance depends on the nature of the school. In private schools, voice is not strong enough and/or non-existent regarding governance and management issues. School governing bodies such as PTAs and SMCs (in which parents should take part) only exist as a fulfillment of government requirements by MoES but are not functional. Besides, the school owners who choose friends who will front their profit-making agenda appointed the members in such bodies for privately owned schools. In public schools, parents are involved in governance (to a small extent) but more in the management of schools through PTAs and SMCs, hence pointing toward alignment for access. Stakeholders noted that parents' voice in school management are much

stronger compared to governance. Several respondents noted:

"In government schools, parents are the ones that almost own the schools because no major decisions are made without convening PTAs and SMCs meetings which not only represent parents but start with consultations with parents at the Annual General Meetings (AGMs)".

Notably, the voice of the community and traditional leaders are aligned for access. This is because they are much more involved in mobilising parents to send their children to school by encouraging them to provide the required school materials and punishing parents whose children do not go to school. They block children from market areas and trading centres to ensure they attend school.

Whose voice - To what degree is there internal community cohesion: This sub-element discusses whether the voices of parent representatives through PTAs and SMCs represent the voices of the majority or minority. We note that in schools where PTAs and SMCs exist and are functional, these bodies do not adequately represent the views of most parents, as voiced below by parents:

"In meetings, management plants some parents to support its agenda, and not everyone is given a chance to speak, especially if they know you are likely to oppose. For example, if they want to increase school fees, they will go through a few parents and bribe them before the meeting to bring such an idea to the discussion table at the General meeting".

The criteria usually followed in selecting representatives to the PTAs further reflect that these associations represent the voices of a few parents suggesting an alignment toward selection. These criteria include the parent's education level, socio-economic status, and competence level (in terms of mobilizing parents, an oversight role in managing finances, calling meetings, and reigning in on headteachers).

4.3.2 Finance

We discuss the finance element under the voice and choice relationship using two main sub-elements, i.e., if the local level has some discretion over financing for education and the nature of the information used to inform financing

decisions. The finance design element is aligned for access.

Does the local level have some discretion over financing for education: Parents in public schools have a weaker voice on the spending of capitation grants. Whereas the School Management Committee (SMC) is involved in the planning and budgeting process of the schools, these bodies do not represent the views of all the parents in the affairs of the school but their selfish motives. For instance, the head teachers in some public schools connive with the chairpersons of the SMC or the treasurer, and they misuse the capitation funds released from the government. Relatedly, parents have no say over teacher salaries in all public schools. This is because teachers on the payroll receive their salaries directly from the public service commission. The school management or the head teachers have no authority to withhold teacher salaries.

There is no or limited induction provided to SMCs, which affects their parents' participation in the financing and budgeting processes of the schools. Leaders of SMCs argue it is difficult to represent all parents' views in the financing decisions of the school. Instead, they suggest schools get parents' views by setting up a suggestions box. Parents decision-making is limited only to the non-salary re-current budget of the school. In private schools, SMCs are essentially non-functional and therefore constituted for formality to meet government requirements. In this case, if there is any misappropriation of funds by school owners, parents have no avenue and power to question such mismanagement.

SMCs and PTAs in public schools have limited say on the finances because the decision-making process takes a top-bottom approach, not a bottom-top structure. The latter approach would provide an opportunity for all parents to be at the forefront of the decision-making process in school. Instead of parents forwarding their ideas to the school, the SMCs impose their ideas on the parents. This, therefore, undermines their financial views in the school's management. There are notable variations in the strength of the voice of parents across the urban-rural divide. In urban-based public schools, parents don't demand accountability, as they mainly focus on their children's performance.

In contrast, most rural parents demand accountability for their hard-earned monies paid at school. In most primary schools, parents have limited say on the school facility

grant because of limited information on these funds. Most parents don't know that this fund exists. Instead, parents mostly follow up on private contributions such as school and remedial fees, which they feel entitled to know. Regarding the capitation grant, parents have more say on the contingency budget vote because they believe it is redundant and can be used for any other emerging issues. The strength of the voice of parents in primary schools is aligned for selection. The parents have limited, or no say over, the financing decisions of the school. They exercise the limited say through SMCs, and PTAs, which mostly represent selfish interests, not the views of all the parents in the school.

What information is used to inform financing decisions:

In most public schools, parents prioritize financing the feeding of learners to promote pupils' learning in school. They also highly prioritize initiatives to improve their children's welfare, such as providing breakfast and lunch for them. In most private schools, financing decisions (for instance, funding remedial lessons) made by parents are aimed at enabling children to pass high stake exams such as the Mock and PLE. Parents consider extra classes the teacher offers when making financing decisions for schools. School enrolment informs financing in government schools as opposed to the learning needs of students. Relatedly, financing decisions are mainly aimed at building structures to promote access to education for learners. The alignment of voice and choice in public schools focuses on access to enable children to continue attending school with a limited focus on achieving learning outcomes. In private schools, it focuses on selection.

4.3.3 Information

Do standardized exams provide regular, reliable, relevant information on learning? The leading information that all primary schools provide to parents to show what takes place at school is a termly report. The main content in the end-of-term reports is the learners' performance, as indicated by the scores in the exams done at the end of the term. Additionally, schools (the class teacher and the head teacher) briefly comment on the learners' behavioral conduct at school. Some reports further provide information regarding the next term, for example, we expect the requirements that parents to provide to learners and the reporting day.

However, there are variations between private and public

schools in the number of assessments considered at the end of the term. For instance, while most public schools mainly do two sets of exams (beginning of term and end of term) at most, private schools subject learners (especially those in higher classes, mainly primary seven) to several exams, usually mid-term, monthly and sometimes weekly in the bid to get them used to answer exam questions in preparation for the PLE. The availability of financial resources in private schools may explain this variation. As noted by one of the respondents:

“The more you examine a learner, the more they get used to answering the kind of questions that are likely to be set in P.L.E. Private schools have leveraged the availability of financial resources provided by parents to purchase all the exams that are on the market plus those done in different schools and different regions. Doing so many assessments increases the likelihood that they may repeat some questions in the national exams, increasing learners’ performance.”

Most parents emphasise the grades/exam scores in the report compared to the rest of the content. The respondents indicated that most parents are illiterate and can barely understand the information provided by schools. Thus, they mainly focus on their children’s positions in class and, sometimes, the marks obtained in the different subjects. Sometimes, they seek assistance for them to understand their grades. Worse still, even some literate parents cannot comprehend the grades/ grading system used.

The above findings indicate that parents’ desire for good grades in the national exams has acted as a push factor for schools to do whatever is within their means to satisfy their clients’ (mainly parents) demands. This points to the quality of learners sent out to the secondary level and raises questions on the reliability of the assessments provided to parents.

Stakeholders showed that parents’ demand for distinctions has resulted in increasing cases of cheating in national exams. The reliability of such information is thus not guaranteed since the grades obtained by a learner may not be the genuine reflection of their capabilities.

In 2020, a local newspaper (Daily Monitor) reported that: *“There never seems to be an end to exam malpractice. Every*

time national exam results are released, there is always a portion of results withheld because of malpractice, and of course, those culprits get away with the vice”.

Worse still, cheating is common even in the termly exams, especially in private schools where good scores are used to attract more learners into the school. Teachers in private schools indicated that:

“Directors of private schools are after presenting high scores to parents. Teachers are forced to forge/ inflate marks, with the objective of not presenting poor performance to parents because they may transfer their children to other schools, or they may not bring more children to the same school due to low grades. In some instances, teachers do the exams together with the learners. Also, teachers, especially those in the lower primary where learners use pencils, mark exam scripts with rubbers so that if a learner has written a wrong answer, the teacher can easily rub it and write the correct answer.”

“In some schools, the administrators, especially the Director of Studies, discuss an exam with the learners prior to giving it to them. This is common when the administrator is in charge of a particular subject in a class because it is shameful for a whole director of studies to have his subject under-performed.”

Besides parents’ demand for top grades, the use of learners’ grades as appraisal tools for teachers is also responsible for the forging of exam scores by most teachers, especially in private schools. Teachers in different regions indicated that their performance is judged based on trends in learners’ performance, and then they are forced to present good grades to the directors, whether or not they are true.

On the side of parents also noted that they sometimes doubt the reliability of the information provided by schools about their children’s performance. One parent narrated that she often tries to ask her child the same questions they initially passed in the exams, and the child’s failure to attempt them leaves her worried. A parent noted:

“I was disappointed when I requested my primary three children to write the word ‘book’, marked right in the script, and the child could not write it. From then onwards, I

started doubting the marks written on the scripts and in the report. I resorted to extra teaching for my child during the holidays to cover up such gaps and bring my child up to speed.”

Findings reveal that a child could have excellent marks on their scripts but are not doing well in other aspects of life. Indeed, most of the respondents indicated that a mark is/cannot be a measure of learning given the highlighted instances, such as exam malpractice. As such, marks are not a relevant measure of learning. Respondents added that a mark is, in most cases, not an accurate reflection of what the child has learned in school but what they have crammed. This was confirmed when school heads reported that during the admission of learners into the secondary level, preference/priority is given to learners from government schools since exam malpractice is more common in private schools. As such, learners from government primary schools are more trusted (in terms of their capabilities) even when they have poorer grades compared to those from private schools with much higher grades. The priority given to exam scores is an indication of an education system that is aligned for selection.

Beyond standardized exams, do families get other accounts of whether their child is learning: As earlier noted, beyond standardized exams such as the beginning of term, mid and end-of-term assessments, some schools administer weekly and monthly exams to their learners. These results are usually provided to parents on specified days, such as visitation days. It is important to note that these assessments mainly focus on the child’s academic performance, leaving out other aspects of learning, such as performance in co-curricular activities that are part of the curriculum. As such, schools have resorted to encouraging cram work and memorization as they prepare learners for national exams. This further confirms that Uganda’s education system is aligned for selection since performance in any assessment is the principal focus.

However, some traces of learning were reported by a few stakeholders. For example, participation in co-curricular activities such as Music, Dance, and Drama (MDD), speech days, talent exhibition days, etc., are some other accounts provided by schools to parents to help them know that their children are learning. These are common in public schools where parents easily demand such activities.

In addition, according to parents, behavioral change and talent recognition in children are indicators of learning.

“If I am invited to my child’s school to attend speech day, and I see my child ably and confidently expressing him/herself in public, then I would know that learning is taking place at school. Secondly, if there are things that my child could not do before joining the school, and now she is able to do them, then I can tell that the child is picking up this good behavior from school, for example, the self-drive that comes with the school routine is an indicator of learning.”

4.3.4 Motivation

The motivation design element under the voice and choice relationship comprises two sub-elements. These are the strength of voice and alignment of voice and choice. Strength of voice examines the level of discretion that the principals (such as parents and community leaders) have over the teacher/head teacher career structures covering issues pertaining to the principal’s role in teacher hiring, firing, placement, appraisal, promotion, etc. Alignment of voice and choice further discusses the information the principals used to justify decisions regarding teacher/headteacher career structures.

Do parents have some discretion over teacher career structures? This sub-element is, to a large extent, aligned for selection and access with elements of patronage, depending on whether the school is public or private. In public schools, principals have no say in hiring teachers as it is done centrally by the government’s Education Service Commission. However, they have some say regarding the transfer and disciplining of teachers/head teachers. For example, parents and communities can quickly push for an immediate transfer of a teacher/headteacher implicated in defiling a pupil or drunkard-ness and insubordination. Sometimes, parents show their dissatisfaction with a teacher by demonstrating and demanding that the person leaves the school immediately. However, the degree of the strength of parents and communities in influencing teacher career structures also varies with whether the school is in an urban or rural setting. Parents in urban settings have a stronger voice, and their recommendations for teacher transfer are usually more acted on than those in rural schools. As earlier discussed, some public schools, through their PTAs and

SMCs, privately hire additional staff funded through the PTA fund. In such instances, parents have a direct and more decisive role in hiring, firing, and promoting such teachers. Following this discussion, the strength of voice is aligned mainly for selection in public schools.

Concerning private schools, voice has minor role regarding the teacher career structures because the school director's/owner's decisions are paramount in such situations. Whereas parents can influence the director to fire the teacher/head teacher based on information coming from children, the school director has the final say. However, some private schools (especially profit-oriented schools) listen to parents so much that they would rather lose a teacher than students. In this regard, the strength of voice broadly aligns with access in private schools.

What information is used to inform judgments about school leadership/school choice? This is aligned for selection because, in both government and private schools, decisions taken by parents/communities regarding teacher careers are justified mainly based on learners' performance in examinations, especially PLE. However, in rural schools, in some settings, the teacher's discipline, i.e., if a teacher is implicated in defiling a pupil or is a drunkard, supersedes performance. Other criteria that inform parents'/communities' decisions include respect for the teacher/head teacher in the community, enrolment, teacher attendance, children's oratory skills, and teachers' relationship with the children and the parents. These criteria point to alignment for access.

5. INCOHERENCES WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Incoherences within the compact relationship

A significant incoherence that arises in this relationship is between delegation and finance. Incoherences within the compact relationship arise from what state executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities delegate to education authorities, how the state authorities evaluate the performance of the education authorities on delegated tasks and how the state authorities finance the education authorities to deliver the delegated tasks. Whereas the state authorities delegate provision of quality, equitable

and relevant education to the education authorities, the education authorities are often under-funded to carry out these tasks. The reducing level of public expenditure as a share of the national budget and GDP since FY 2014/15 illustrates these phenomena. Insufficient or delayed funding is often cited as the reason for several incomplete priorities by the MoES.

Incoherences within the management relationship

This section highlights incoherences in what the education authorities delegate to frontline providers, the financial resources that frontline providers receive to carry out these tasks, how supported they are to carry out the tasks, what information education authorities use to hold the frontline providers accountable, and how frontline providers are motivated. A couple of incoherence arise within the management relationship, as discussed below.

Beyond the limited financial resource envelope that schools and teachers receive to carry out delegated tasks, a major source of incoherence arises from the delegated tasks from the different authorities. NCDC delegates to schools and teachers to deliver the curriculum designed to achieve mastery of the concepts and content. UNEB delegates to schools and teachers to prepare and present ready pupils for the Primary Leaving Examinations. Whereas NCDC focuses on curriculum mastery, UNEB focuses on assessing learners, albeit with some shortcomings, because of poor coordination between the two entities. This has been a source of contradiction for schools and teachers on where they should focus. For example, whereas the curriculum provides practical lessons for different levels such as Music, Dance, and Drama (MDD), sports, and gardening, they do not account for these on the school timetables since they are not examinable.

Because the UNEB assessment often focuses on lower-order levels of cognitive demand that encourage more memorization than content and concept mastery, it has encouraged what teachers referred to as delivery of the curriculum in an examination format where they teach the curriculum through questions. This is further depicted in the delivery of the recently adopted abridged curriculum, which emphasizes formative assessment through continuous assessment instead of summative assessment. However, because schools are charged with preparing pupils for examinations, they have continued to give pupils traditional

exams as before to prepare them for the PLE because they know that ultimately performance at PLE will be used to evaluate their performance even if the abridged curriculum discouraged examinations. This situation is worsened by the increasing commercialization of the education sector which has caused unhealthy competition and a focus on examination grades at the cost of content mastery. This is depicted for example in the increasing dependence on private examination bureaus for examinations that are often misaligned with the curriculum and learning levels of the pupils. Moreover, the weak supervision of schools and teachers has also exacerbated the situation.

Concerning support, whereas NCDC expects the schools and teachers to deliver the curriculum, there are often gaps in training these teachers on the curricula, as previously discussed. They are usually equipped with limited and/or poorly designed instructional material like textbooks and teaching guides, making it challenging to deliver the curriculum as intended. A case in point is the thematic curriculum, which, since its launch in 2003-2004, still has some misunderstandings surrounding its delivery. In our discussions with different teachers, several cited not receiving sufficient training because of the cascade model adopted during the training. This brings further challenges when the trained teacher is transferred to another school, leaving a skills gap.

Similarly, for the abridged curriculum, several teachers, especially in rural areas, cited that they were never trained with the rollout of the curriculum. In contrast, some private school teachers until now do not know what this curriculum looks like and what instructional materials to use and yet are expected to deliver it. These realities have often affected how teachers adopt and embrace new curricula, a major source of incoherence in service delivery.

Beyond in-service training, pre-service training offered at Primary Teacher's Colleges (PTCs) is also, to an extent, poorly aligned with the curriculum. This is mainly because there is no specialization in PTCs depending on the level that one will teach, and the language of instruction is English, regardless of where or what level one will teach. As discussed earlier, the thematic curriculum for the lower primary has a local language policy that requires the language of instruction to be the language spoken by most pupils in that location. If one is going to teach lower primary, they are then expected

to do schemes of work and instruct in the local language of the area where they are located without having prior training on how to do this.

Regarding information, education authorities often rely on limited indicators that hardly measure learning to evaluate the performance of schools and teachers on delegated tasks. For example, whereas the MoES delegates delivering quality education to schools and teachers, they primarily focus on thin quality indicators, especially performance at PLE. Similarly, many inspectors do not collect detailed information on instructional content and practices in the classroom, limiting NCDC's complete evaluation of curriculum delivery.

Incoherences between management and Voice and Choice relationship

This section highlights incoherence between what the education authorities delegate to schools and teachers in the management relationship and what parents' delegate to schools and teachers in the voice and choice relationship. One source of incoherence is differences in what the NCDC requires of schools in terms of curriculum delivery, specifically for lower primary and some criteria that parents want to see schools deliver to the children and subsequently use to judge the performance of a school. As discussed, the lower primary curriculum emphasizes the use of the local language. However, discussions with parents revealed that one thing parents prioritize and want from schools is the ability of the child to speak English, hence bringing about conflict for schools and teachers. This has led to some schools, especially private schools, completely disregarding the local language and emphasizing English to satisfy the demands of the parents.

Similarly, another case of conflicting demands from NCDC and parents is the abridged curriculum that emphasizes more continuous assessment rather than summative examinations. However, since parents require accountability from schools as regular pen and paper examinations, schools have been pressured to continue subjecting the pupils to such examinations instead of the recommended continuous and formative assessments. This further highlights the focus of the primary education system on pass rates that do not reflect curriculum mastery and learning gains.

6. CONCLUSION AND POLICY ACTIONS

Despite progress made in improving access to education, Uganda continues to grapple with a severe learning crisis. Children are achieving more years of schooling but without mastering essential competencies for their levels of education.

Overall, primary education in Uganda aims to achieve different goals other than learning for all children in the system. Most components in the system aim to achieve selection with a focus on a few deserving pupils, especially the topmost performers. Several components also aim at achieving access where the focus is on minimum inputs like enrolment, transition, completion, etc. but without priority on the quality of learning.

Different parts of the primary education system contradict each other. Whereas the top priority of the state authorities is delivering quality education, the sector is often faced with financing challenges to meet the delegated tasks. There is a mismatch between the tasks that NCDC and UNEB delegate to the schools and teachers, which often causes challenges in learning delivery and tilts the system toward achieving selection. This mismatch is brought about because of a lack of explicit coordination between the NCDC and UNEB. Whereas NCDC requires schools and teachers to deliver the curriculum to achieve content mastery, teachers are often not adequately trained to do so, causing a mismatch between the system elements of delegation and support. Pressures from parents who instead rate performance and other indicators such as the ability to speak English exacerbate this, further pressuring schools and teachers to satisfy such needs at the expense of content mastery.

In order to improve the quality of education and tackle the learning crisis at the primary level, the following actions are proposed:

Improve school-based in-service training led by Center Coordinating Tutors and head teachers. Teachers are key stakeholders in the education sector, and the interaction between teachers and pupils is key to ensuring learning. The government needs to enhance in-service training and

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to achieve a leap from schooling to quality teaching and learning and overcome incoherences in teacher training observed within the management relationship (For more on this, see “Form of instructional materials and teacher training” and “delivery of teacher training” in Section 4.2.3). For example, allocate sufficient funds to that area and ensure that such training is conducted based on a needs assessment and continuously as opposed to only when there is a major change. This should be accompanied by improving teacher motivation (See motivation under the management relationship in Section 4.2.5), primarily through enhanced compensation packages. This will ensure that quality teaching is attracted to and retained in the sector.

Improve the effectiveness of community-based structures to strengthen their supervisory functions. Structures like SMCs, PTAs, and community leaders are on the ground and know the frontline providers’ traditions and norms compared to the MoES, UNEB, or NCDC. These need to be sensitized on their roles and empowered to effectively monitor and supervise the teaching and learning processes to ensure that learning is achieved (For more, see “Do parents play a role in school management and governance?” in Section 4.3.1). This is not only reasonable given that these structures are already existent though non-functional, but also empowering these structures would cost-effectively strengthen the inspection function of MoES.

Regulate commercialization in the sector that is contributing to the worsening learning crisis. To overcome the exam-curriculum misalignment within the management relationship, exam-setting bureaus such as Prime and Sipro should be brought under one umbrella body that must be supervised and regulated by the MoES to ensure that the exams they are setting are the appropriate ones for a term and class (For more on this, see “Exam Design (Exam-curriculum alignment) in Section 4.2.4.). Similarly, publishers of learning materials like textbooks and pamphlets should be adequately supervised by the relevant bodies to ensure that the content is up to date and matches what is in the curriculum for every class (See “quality of the instructional material” and “Coherence between the instructional materials/ training and other design elements” in Section 4.2.3). Furthermore, MoES should regularly supervise and regulate private schools to curb the tendency of doing “anything” for marks and grades, creating unnecessary

competition in the sector to the detriment of learners.

Ensure coordination among different stakeholders. Effective coordination among different stakeholders is essential to realign the system toward learning. Stakeholders/institutions, such as MoES, NCDC, and UNEB need to work closely to set the goals for frontline providers to eliminate incoherence. Additionally, there is a need to engage parents throughout different system changes to ensure they embrace them (See Delegation under the management relationship in Section 4.2.1 and under the voice and choice relationship in Section 4.3.1).

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ANNEX

Table A1: Districts from which workshop participants were selected

Region	Meeting point	Selected Districts	Region	Meeting point	Selected Districts
Eastern	Mbale	Mbale			Yumbe
		Soroti			Adjumani
		Kamuli	Northern	Gulu	Gulu
		Jinja			Kitgum
		Kapchorwa			Lira
South-Western	Mbarara	Mbarara			Apac
		Buhweju			Amuru
		Isingiro	Central	Masaka	Masaka
		Kanungu			Sembabule
		Kabale			Mubende
Western	Fortportal	Fortportal			Kalangala
		Kamwenge			Rakai
		Kasese	Kampala	Kampala	Kampala
		Bundibugyo			Mukono
West Nile	Arua	Arua			Kayunga
		Nebbi			Wakiso

Table A2: Regional workshop schedule

Day	Participants	Relationship as per RISE framework
Monday	District Authorities (DEOs, District Inspectors, Center Coordinating Tutors and District Service Commission)	Principals – Management relationship
Tuesday	School leaders (Private and government school headteachers, private school directors, School Management Committee representative, Directors of Studies)	Agents – Management relationship
Wednesday	School leaders (Private and government school headteachers, private school directors, School Management Committee representative, Directors of Studies)	Agents – Voice & Choice relationship
Thursday	Teachers (Private, government, Lower primary, Upper primary, Rural and urban mix)	Agents – Management relationship
Friday	Teachers (Private, government, Lower primary, Upper primary, Rural and urban mix)	Agents – Voice & Choice relationship
Saturday	Parents, Community Opinion leaders, religious leaders, PTA representatives	Principals – Voice & Choice relationship



Economic Policy Research Centre
Plot 51, Pool Road, Makerere University Campus
P.O. Box 7841, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256-414-541023/4, Fax: +256-414-541022
Email: eprc@eprcug.org, Web: www.eprcug.org