

Schooling Ugandan Girls: a policy historiography

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Abstract

This is an abstract about Uganda. When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government came to power in 1986, it had to address many challenges in order to achieve its objectives among which were: poverty eradication, eradication of illiteracy, reducing unemployment, bringing peace and prosperity for all. However, the government realised that in order to achieve the above, there was need to bring all citizens on board for national development. The first major challenge was the wide socio-economic gap between women and men. A deliberate action by the government to promote girls' education therefore took centre stage and resources were quickly mobilised to this effect.

This paper is therefore intended to analyse the policy on education for girls in Uganda and the subsequent policies of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE).

Through critical analysis, the paper reveals the policy's achievement of increasing the number of girls in schools and changing lives of women, still the disadvantaged girls from lower social economic family background and the northern part of Uganda have not been brought aboard making it difficult for them to access education there by limiting their social mobility, economic empowerment and political participation. Instead, the paper observes, the policy has helped the already advantaged girls from urban areas, central and western parts of the country as well as those from high social economic family backgrounds.

Introduction

This paper is concerned with girls' education in Uganda, the intervention of different policies like affirmative action, universal primary and universal secondary education. Formal education neglected girls especially in secondary and higher education. In cognizance of this, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) has implemented Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) and affirmative action in higher education for undergraduate degree programmes since 1990.

Under the above policies, girls' enrolment has increased significantly. However, it is observed that graduates do not correspond with enrolment because of high dropout rates (MoE-Report 2006a).

These policies have been touted as one of the best methods for ensuring girls entering school. However, since the implementation of these policies, the focus of researchers that deal with low participation of girls in education slightly shifted to 'low academic performance' (Demewoz et al, 2005; Habtamu, 2003; Tesfaye S., 2007 in Azeb, 2007: 9). This is because some girls enroll with lower entrance points in case of affirmative action in higher institutions of learning. Such debates and in particular affirmative action itself are not irrelevant in terms of educational equity (ibid: 9). As Azeb (2007) noted however, a key observation is the tendency of such arguments to gravitate towards presenting the educational institutions as neutral or as 'leveled playing fields' and girls are considered as a homogenized group. No question is raised about what makes some of the girls perform better than others academically (intra-group differences), how the institutions deal with diversity of pupils/students and why the institution remains rigid despite diverse interest of pupils/students (ibid; 9).

In view of the above, this paper uses Gale's (2001) critical policy historiography of girls' schooling policies in Uganda. Looking at the effects of the country's changing political and economic values in different historical perspectives and framework, the paper stresses the shift of Uganda's education from being male dominated to include females although access by females is still limited to those with resources and from urban areas. This paper explains the shifts by dividing the period into three regimes (eras). The Post-Independence Period (1962-1970); the Economic/Political Crisis (1971-1985); and the Economic Recovery Period (1986-2006) with the gender lens.

This paper explains the crises that were created by the first two periods (eras) that prompted the current regime to adopt different policies towards girls' education. The paper compares

the past regimes with NRM in order 'to expose the possible relationship between the social-educational present and the social-educational past' (Kincheloe, 1991: 234).

Data is drawn from documentary evidence, primary and secondary sources. Primary information is found in government policy documents such as the White Papers on education policies, the constitution of the Republic of Uganda, departmental records and reports, statistics and minutes of meetings; written literature and the current information on education in Uganda which is available in the print media (*The New Vision*, *The Monitor*, *The Weekly Observer* and *The Red Pepper* newspapers). Guided by the questions asked by critical policy historiography (Gale, 2001), I begin by: examining the 'public issues' and 'private troubles' in these three periods and identifying the reasons previous settlements were replaced in order to identify the nature of the changes; explaining the complexities in these different policy domains; and exploring critical sociological questions about the advantaged and the disadvantaged within these different higher education entry settlements.

What is gender?

Gender can be defined as differences between male and female within the same household and within and between cultures that are socially and culturally constructed and change over time. These differences will be reflected in: roles, responsibilities, and access to resources, constraints, opportunities, needs, perceptions, views, decision making and others held by both male and female. The attributes, opportunities and relationships are learned through socialization processes. UN (2000) shows that gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context.

What is girls' education?

Education is a fundamental right for all children, including girls. Yet, as in many other areas of their lives, girls' prospects for education are diminished because of poverty coupled with gender discrimination. In this paper, I am most concerned with primary, secondary and higher school education for the girls in Uganda.

The need for girls' education

The World Bank has stressed the high social rates of return to female education as an important development strategy for developing countries and this strategy is broadly agreed across a range of agencies and governments. It is widely claimed that educated women marry later, want fewer children and are more likely to use effective methods of contraception. Large differences in fertility rates are found between those who have completed at least seven

years of education and women who have not completed primary education (UN, 1995). The more educated the mother, the lower is maternal mortality and the healthier is the child produced (World Bank, 1995). It is calculated that child mortality falls by about eight percent for each additional year of parental schooling for at least the first eight to ten years of schooling. This is explained through the use of medical services and improved household health behavior, resulting from attitudinal changes and ability to afford better nutrition and health services.

Furthermore, it is stated that education increases economic productivity (World Bank 1995). Girls' education helps to achieve the goal of empowerment and autonomy of women and improves their political, social, and economic status. This is a highly important end in itself and is essential for the achievement of sustainable development.

Although the World Bank has accepted the argument that investment in female education pays off through higher social benefits, this calculation has been criticized. Berhman (1991) explains that the externalities to female education are not as great as it is often claimed and are actually realized as private benefits. Furthermore, he argues that child health and welfare and fertility reduction may be gained in a more cost-effective way by spending directly on child health and family planning rather than on female education (cited in Baden and Green 1994).

Gender and girls' education

Struggling to access education and equal rights has a long history in feminism. In the United States, feminist politics followed two initial paths in the 1960s. First from the early 1960s, the Women's rights movement included many professional women who campaigned for equality in education employment. Education must start with girl children for they are the future women of the nation.

Liberal feminists agitate for women's and girls' education to enable them move beyond the emotional, private sphere of the home into the rational, public sphere of citizenship. Tong represented this spatial division in vivid terms, writing that eighteenth century married women were birds confined to cages, with nothing to do except plume themselves and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch (Tong, 1989).

The relationship between women and their daughters is girls following the path of their mothers who are not empowered in the Ugandan societies and hence limited decision making

in matters affecting their equal rights to education. Liberal feminist ideas have been extremely influential in advocating for women's rights and the need to value females as well as males (Agaba, 2007:26)

Situating the paper in Discourse of Gender Equality in Education

As Azeb (2007) put it the increasing recognition of role of education in enhancing human well-being and due education deprivation for girls, widespread scholarly works have been conducted on gender equality in education. This paper engages in the debate dealing with twofold arguments. The first one is the notion of gender in the discourse of gender equality in education. Subrahmanian (cited in Azeb: 10) separates the debate into two as gender disparity and gender equality. Gender disparity refers to the numerical difference between boys and girls in enrolment, participation and graduation rates whereas gender equality requires viewing gender as 'a 'relational process' that plays out through educational systems, and the norms and values institutionalized within them'. She also advocates for gender equity that is premised on resource redistribution for the achievability of justice in education (Subrahmanian, 2005:399 in Azeb, 2007:10).

In Azeb (2007),Unterhalter also identifies three notions of gender as a noun, as an adjective and as a verb in the discourse of gender equality in education. Debates that use gender as a noun emphasize the prevalence of high gender disparity in access and participation. The usage of gender as adjective pays special attention to the institutions by looking at gendered relations in schools and households, and gender as a verb means viewing gender as a form of action and identity formation (Unterhalter, 2007:3 in Azeb,2007; 10).

Relatedly, Alkam and Unterhalter cited in Azeb (2007) assert that although gender got attention in most interventions like Education for all, policies failed to deal with gender as social relation and gender as an identity formation in educational institutions (Unterhalter, 2007). However, in this paper, I examine the issue through the lens of both gender and intersectionality and argue that the notion of intersectionality enriches the question of gender justice in education. Such a view is more useful than seeing gender as binary concept, a view which has tended to obscure the multiple and intersectional experiences of girls (ibid: 10).

Secondly, the paper examines the strategies used to redress gender injustices in education. A number of interventions have been taken by different actors to redress gender injustices in education. Some focus on enhancing enrolment, others on reforming the institution by mainstreaming gender, and others claim for transforming the educational institution (Squires,

1999; Unterhalter, 2007 cited in Azeb, 2007:10). However, the strategies have tended to be either/or option.

The Post-Independence Period (1962-1970)

Formal education in Uganda was first introduced by the Christian Missionaries in the 1880's. This is opposed to informal education which was provided by parents to their children at home basically preparing them for future parenthood. Historically, access to school was the privilege of children of the rich and has only expanded to mass participation recently. The first schools set up by the government were for children of administrators and chiefs around urban areas. Few girls' schools, especially at secondary level, were established leading to a serious gender disparity. Until the early 1990s, the nation's education system was full of gender disparities in enrolment, drop outs, and performance. Formal education emphasised the negligence of girls' education, so that by 1990 the imbalance in males and females participating in education remained unaddressed (Education Policy Review Commission - EPRC, 1992).

The paper attributes these conspicuous disparities to historical and cultural beliefs that regarded males as being more important than females, as a discourse which related to the class-specific role of women as *cultured* wives and mothers (Kenway, 1990). As Agaba (2007:66) clearly put it:

When parents are too poor, girls should stop going to school because they can help in housework and tilling gardens. The boys can continue their schooling because they cannot do housework compared to girls. The boys cannot do better work compared to the girls. [...] educated girls take riches to the husband's family after marriage. (Rural female parent in Uganda).

African cultures suppressed girls who were confined to household chores while their male counterparts went to school. As in Australia in the 1850s, as Kenway (1990:27) put it, '*girls' domestic futures were emphasized as were boys' occupational futures*'. There was no demand for girls to be educated because of poverty and traditional 'son-priority' ideology. Because families could not raise enough resources to send all children to school, boys were given priority.

The Post-Independence governments later started realizing the importance of educating girls especially in reducing social problems and contributing to the nation's development. As Graça Machel (a leading ambassador for child rights) believes, 'to discriminate on the basis of gender is morally indefensible and economically, politically and socially unsupportable'

(Plan International, 2007:9). The 1964 Education Act for non-denominational schools and the later Act of 1970 gave the government full control over schools, but due to inadequate staff, lack of supervision and enforcement on the side of the government, girls' schooling was not promoted and even the existing education policies were not effectively implemented. Later attempts were made by the government which adopted a number of Five-Year Development Plans: 1960/61-1965/66; 1966/67-1970/71; and 1971/72-1975/76. Only the first two were implemented (EPRC, 1992:3). The last was not implemented because of the Liberation War of 1978/79.

In 1963, the Castle commission placed emphasis on the equality of opportunity to access education for all people and particularly the expansion of girls' education throughout the country, a goal still being pursued today (EPRC, 1992). The commission argued that gender disparity in education is a broad based issue that must be handled from social, political, economic and traditional points of view. With the commission's report, the government realised that there were high levels of illiteracy, lack of well educated human capital for the country's economic development, high rates of early marriages, and attitudes and practices (including traditional, cultural beliefs) that reinforced gender stereotypes and a general lack of knowledge about the benefits of education. All these retarded economic development. This prompted the government to push for equality by re-affirming the commission's findings in the Government's document entitled Rehabilitation and Development Plan 1987/88-1990/1991 (EPRC, 1992:3).

However, as earlier observed, this settlement only benefited girls of administrators and chiefs around urban areas. Girls from rural areas had no access to education either because their parents were ignorant of the value of education or because of their cultural beliefs that girls were only trained to be future wives. Parents believed that educated girls get married and take knowledge and wealth to their husbands' families, so they saw no reason to 'invest' resources that would leave the family. This view was particularly evident in remote districts. At the international level, there was limited interaction by the government with donor agencies that could offer external support especially in promoting girls' education.

Economic/ Political crisis (1971-1985) (Wasted Years)

The 1970s and early 1980s saw no significant step taken to address the plight of girls' in Uganda. The challenges of the former regime were inherited and worse situations were yet to come. The period witnessed the poorest quality in education at all levels as a result of civil

strife and economic decline (EPRC, 1992). Due to declining government resource allocation to the education sector and rampant corruption, many schools collapsed or closed down and those that survived had no resources to run them. Thus, girls experienced low educational levels. Worse still, many fled into exile and others were concentrated in camps where the most vulnerable were young girls who were harassed and raped mainly by government soldiers. This resulted in pregnancies, early marriages and the death of some girls while giving birth.

The education sector also faced brain drain as teachers migrated to other countries, especially South Africa and Botswana for higher pay. In an effort to review and re-structure the education system curriculum to match it with the country's realistic needs, indigenization of the syllabus and of the teaching profession followed the massive exodus of expatriate teachers in 1971-1972. As a result, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) was set up in 1973 (Bitamazire, 2005). However, as in the previous government, what was put in place for girls' schooling lacked career guidance and counselling which limited girls' access to further educational opportunities. Regarded as a source of wealth and income, girls were forced into early marriages. Ugandan society, like that of many African countries at the time, believed that the only education a girl needed was to be trained to read a letter from her future husband. That was enough and formal education was considered meaningless!

During this period, Northern Uganda experienced unprecedented political instability, military strife and economic decline. Educational infrastructure was destroyed and there was low morale among teachers which led to mass exodus to other countries. The standard of education declined so much that the country could no longer plan for national development. Education of girls was therefore a nightmare as the education ministry could no longer fund programmes to equip and improve school facilities that would promote equity. There was also lack of adequate partnership between the Ugandan government and other agencies in ensuring equitable education. Foreign aid was suspended/reduced, Non Government Organisations (NGOs) withdrew their support from Uganda due to political interference and, as a result, little could be done about girls' education.

The 1970 economic depression, the expulsion of Asians, government neglect of education, embezzlement and corruption which were rampant (EPRC, 1992), all left the country in a very fragile situation. With decline in the number of schools and increase in population and expulsion of Asians who owned most of these schools, the hopes of educating girls were once

again shelved and this exacerbated the problem of uneducated girls in Uganda. It was a dream for girls to go to school, let alone university. It seemed that the government was unwilling to rectify the situation; neither could the Education Policy Review Commission of 1978. However, when the NRM government came to power in 1986, there was significant change that was later to see the resurrection of the country and the change of policies towards girls' education.

Economic Recovery Period (1986- 2006)

The period that followed the advent of NRM government to power witnessed fundamental changes in the whole economy. Much emphasis was put on major sectors of the economy and particular attention was paid to those sectors that would lead to quick economic recovery and accelerate development. Access to education for all was the major priority. As a result, there was rapid expansion of schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) was established through General notice No.57 of 1987 with the aim of reforming the education system (EPRC, 1992, p.x). The initial report of the Commission was followed up by the 1992 white paper upon which the current education strategy is based. Implementation of the policy was reported in three phases: Phase one (Short Term): 1992/93 to 1996/97: Phase two (Medium Term): 1997/98- 2001/02: Phase three (Long Term); 2002/03 and beyond (EPRC, 1992:2). The policy was directed at making education relevant, of high quality and capable of achieving unity, economic prosperity and genuine independence for Uganda. However, as with the case of developing countries, lack of funding led to postponement of implementation of these phases until 1997. It should be noted that much as opportunities for girls could have been indirectly created, there was not any specific plan put in place to uplift girls' education that would lead to development of skilled gender balanced labour force.

For the nation to compete globally, in the face of globalization, and the wave of liberalisation sweeping across the globe with the growth of knowledge based economies and the country's economic development needs, it became apparent that the country required a large number of skilled labour force to foster economic development. This necessitated the expansion of girls' education in line with national and international demands. It was also realised that schooling was the only channel through which women could access well-paid jobs, command respect in society as well as providing opportunities for girls from poor backgrounds to change their identity.

The government also realised that there was need for direct intervention in the society to change the traditional outlook of education which placed value on boys' schooling. In relation to this, Agaba (2007) asserted that some parents in Uganda clearly stated that the parents understood how important it is to educate girls but lack enough money for girls' education. The urban male parents group said that educating girls is in itself very expensive since they have more demands than the boys. Some of the demands of girls mentioned included much pocket money, more clothing, sanitary wear and beauty make up kits. Due to lack of school essentials and other costs involved, some girls end up dropping out of school. Traditionally, if choice had to be between a boy and a girl going to school, the boy would be given priority. As put forward by one government official in Agaba's report (2007) that:

When the income is low in the household, the parents make choice on who should go to school. This is because of the perception that educating boys is more profitable for they are the future heirs as girls get married with in the patrilineal system (an official from National Council for Children, NCC).

Thus, government intervention was important in order to develop education for all such that girls from poor backgrounds and rural areas could also have more chances to access education and potentially attain high levels like university. People realized that even girls could make much money if they were well educated and so many began to desire education for their daughters.

With the 1990 Education for All (EFA) Conference in Jomtien, Thailand, which drew the world's attention to gender discrimination and the gross inequities between girls' and boys' education throughout the developing world (Rihani et al., 2006), the Ugandan government developed policies aimed at eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education and achieving gender equity by 2015 with focus on assuring girls' full and equitable access to and achievement of basic quality education.

As Azeb (2007) asserted, gender equality in education, specifically in secondary and higher education holds significant place in feminist theory. A number of scholars have developed typology of overall interventions and debates. For instance, Judith Squires (1999; 2005 in Azeb, 2007:18) identifies three typology of gender equality debate: *inclusion*, *reversal* and *displacement*. Inclusion aims at widening the participation of girls and women in development and focuses on politics of equality and numerical representation of men and women and; and it seeks gender neutrality. Reversal focuses on the politics of gender

differences and recognizes the different experiences of women and men in higher education; it also seeks ‘recognition of female gendered identity’. Studies based on this framework pay attention to female students and staff’s experiences of harassment, violence and discrimination in higher education (Azeb, 2007:18).

Lastly, the displacement focuses on subject positions and gendering (as a verb rather than a noun) and the diversity of experiences and the discursive institutional regimes. It seeks ‘to deconstruct those discursive regimes that engender the subject’ (Squires, 1999; 2005:368 in Azeb, 2007:18). Displacement associated policies include development of ‘new spheres for knowledge production and acknowledgement of diverse identities and epistemologies’ in higher education (Unterhalter, 2006:623 cited in Azeb, 2007; 18). In Squires’ classification, the affirmative action is part of inclusion approach that aims at enhancing the enrolment of girls in education, and the transformative strategy is part of displacement approach that focuses on transforming educational institutions (ibid:2007).

Thus, to help redress the inequalities between males and females, and in conformity with global commitments such as Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to which Uganda is a signatory, Strategies /interventions have been developed to promote gender parity in Education:

The issue of gender disparities in education has been one of concern to government and all civil society stakeholders. The Government of Uganda (GoU) policy provides for equal opportunities in education and other sectors for both sexes. The GoU through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) formulated the National Action Plan on Women (NAPW) and the National Gender Policy (NGP) to help advocate for gender equity at all levels in all aspects of life. The ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in collaboration with the GoU and the International community have in addition put in place a number of initiatives/interventions/policies.

- **Universal Primary Education (UPE);** UPE was launched in 1997 following the recommendations of the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC, 1989), the subsequent relevant stipulations of the GoU White Paper (1992), and the development of the Children’s Statute (1996). The Government set key policy objectives of UPE as; Establishing, providing and maintaining quality education as the basis for promoting the necessary human resource development, transforming the society in a

fundamental and positive way, providing the minimum necessary facilities and resources to enable children enter and remain in school and complete the primary cycle of education, making basic education accessible to the learner and relevant to his / her needs as well as meeting national goals, making education accessible in order to eliminate disparities and ensuring that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans.

The policy emphasises equal opportunity for both boys and girls. It focuses on promoting gender equality in enrolment, retention, and performance in primary education. As a result of this, girls' enrolment in primary schools has increased from 46 % in 1997 to 48 % in 1999. The dropout rate for girls fell from 11% in 1995 to 5.6 % in 1998 (MGLSD, 2000). Repetition rates among primary school girls reduced from 17.7% in 1995 to 6.3% in 1998 (Nyanzi, 2002). However, although the gross enrolment increased at the introduction of UPE in 1997, 16.6 % more boys and girls were enrolled (UNICEF 1997).

- The Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (UNCDC) has been revising primary education curriculum since 1992 to make it more gender responsive as part of the Primary Education Reform. The UNCDC recognises that gender equality is not mentioned in the outline of the Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) (Amanda and Amanda 2000).
- A 1990 affirmative action measure awarded **1.5 bonus points** (ie. 1.5 x actual achievement) in the calculation of tertiary entrance scores for females seeking entry into university to women qualifying to enter public universities to increase the number of women graduates. This has increased enrolment of women at the university level from 23 % in 1989 to 35 % in 1999, and 41 % in 2002 (Makerere University Academic Registrar's Records).
- The **National Strategy for Girls Education (NSGE)** was launched to foster gender parity in education. It acts as a master plan for use by all stakeholders in girls' education. NSGE is managed by a national co-ordination/planning committee put in place by the Gender desk at the MoES. Among other things the committee provides support to the districts through planning with them the implementation and monitoring of the NSGE.

- **The Promotion of Girls Education (PGE)** scheme aims at improving girls' retention and performance at school. More than 1000 primary schools in 15 districts of Uganda have so far benefited from this scheme. The PGE scheme provides funds for construction of latrines, classrooms, houses of senior women teachers, girls play grounds, enabling school children to access water and sportswear.
- **The Equity in the Classroom (EIC)** programme aims at facilitating equal participation of girls and boys in the classroom. It is a USAID funded program that provides Technical Assistance and Training workshops whose great target is to increase girls' classroom participation and completion of primary school. It is in line with the MoES' mission to "provide quality education to all" (UPE News Letter Vol. 2. No. 2, 2001). Teachers have been sensitised to change any negative attitudes towards girls' education and adopt methods to promote equity in the classroom. The implementation of EIC is basically done through the core primary teacher training colleges (CPTCs), and EIC activities have been mainstreamed in the National Reform Programme of MoES. All the 18 CPTCs have been covered. The PTC trained 446 Coordinating Centre Tutors (CCTs) who have the capacity of reaching over 9,000 (85%) primary schools of Uganda.
- The **Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education (COPE)** program, and the **Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK)** are initiatives aimed at increasing the access of disadvantaged children who are not able to attend formal school many of whom are girls. Both COPE and ABEK are programmes facilitated by UNICEF Uganda CP 2001. So far 162 COPE/ABEK centres benefiting 3502 disadvantaged girls and 2,906 disadvantaged boys in 10 districts have received support.
- The **Classroom Construction Grant (CCG)** programme builds classrooms and pit latrines for schools while specifically separating girls' latrines from those of boys.
- The **Gender desk** in the MoES headquarters was established to promote activities and programmes aimed at collecting the gender imbalances in education. The gender desk aims at achieving: Equitable access to basic education, Increased girls' retention in school, Increased girls performance especially in science and mathematics, Protection of girls against child abuse and other forms of molestation, Reforming the curricular

to make it more gender sensitive, Improving educational facilities by making them more conducive particularly to girls and other disadvantaged children. Training and re-training teachers (particularly senior women/men teachers and career, teachers) in gender responsive methodology and practice and formulating a gender policy for the MoES.

- **The Girls' Education Movement in Africa (GEM)** was also launched in Uganda in August 2001. The movement aims at promoting gender parity in education through enabling girls to realise and concretise their rights to participate in identifying best practices that enhance their participation in education, and issues that affect their education, and life skills hence forth. GEM specifically targets girls with special needs and creating awareness among the communities about the benefits of educating girls. GEM is a product of the MoES gender desk.
- **Child Friendly School** programme is another intervention facilitated by the UNICEF GoU CP for 2001. It aims at promoting girls' education in a friendly school and home environment at the sub-county, district and national levels. This program is coordinated by the gender desk of the MoES.
- **Girls and focusing Resources for Effective School Health (FRESH)** focuses on provision of safe water and sanitation to schools, provision of washrooms for girls, urinals for boys, and latrines with priority for girls and special emphasis on separation from boys' facilities. About 642 child (girl) friendly primary schools, including promotion of interactive methodologies have benefited approximately 145,500 girls and 259,000 boys.

Although the NRM government came with a deliberate plan for girls, the policies and practices in this period following 1985 had limited success in access and equity terms, even though they ostensibly provided equitably distributed education for girls under the umbrella of the UPE, USE and affirmative policies.

An over view of poverty and girls education

Below are statistics to show how poverty is a very strong factor in affecting girl child education in Uganda. However, it operates together with other factors like orphan hood, child work and poor performance.

Table 3: Key reasons for never attending school by sex

Reason for never attending school	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Too young/sickly/disabled (Physical considerations)	53.2	34.3
Monetary costs	22.4	29.5
Child indifferent to education	2.7	3.8
Orphaned	2.4	5.2
Need to work	15.1	23.6
Others	4.2	4.6

Source: Uganda DHS Survey (1997)

The table shows that the need for girls labor and monetary costs top the factors that accelerate decision to enroll her in school, for the boy it is monetary costs and the child's physical readiness that drive the decision to enroll him or her in school.

Table 4: Main Causes of Dropout at Primary School Level

Reason for Dropout	Boys%	Girls%
Monetary cost(school fund, uniform, text & exercise books, supplies)	57.9	51.3
Labor needed	8.7	15.9
Failed exams and did not want to repeat	10.9	10.1
Child perception that had enough schooling	28.2	20.9
Disability or illness	11.2	8.5
School too far	3.4	3.0
Travel to school unsafe	2.5	2.6
Poor school quality	1.4	2.4
No secondary school places	3.3	5.7
Number of dropouts that participated in study	415	363

Source: Uganda DHS Ed Data Survey 2001.

The monetary costs of schooling continue to lead reasons for dropout even with Universal Primary Education. The statistics show that the need for girl's labor increases on the number of dropouts.

Table 5: primary school enrolment

Primary school total enrolment	2001	2002	2003	2004
Boys	3,528,035	3,721,135	3,872,589	3,732,928
Girls	3,372,881	3,633,018	3,760,725	3,644,364
Total	6,900,916	7,354,153	7,633,314	7,377,292

Source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2000-2004) Education Statistics.

Though the enrolment gap of girls in primary school education is narrowing, still more boys enroll in primary schools than the girls as shown above.

The status of the girl child in rural Uganda

The girl child in Uganda faces double disadvantages because of gender discrimination at the household and community level. These vulnerabilities are even stronger in rural areas, where poverty, traditions and lack of infrastructure prevail. Both boys and girls in these categories

are affected. However, due to the unequal socio-economic gender construct in most African societies, the scale of disadvantages is tipped more against girls and women. Education policy makers and practitioners have been forced to accept serious gender disparities in education that call for urgent action if Uganda is to be among countries that will have achieved the Education for All and MD goals by 2015.

The gender-based constraints to education tend to be more pronounced in rural areas due to the fact that the environment is normally more accommodative for gender inequality. Rural areas display stricter adherence to traditional cultural values, attitudes and practices. As such practices detrimental to girls' education such as early marriage, genital mutilation in Eastern districts of Uganda, sexual violence, excessive domestic chores, male superiority and domination of women are tolerated and encouraged by the community both inside and outside the school. Then in the war torn Northern Uganda, abduction of girls is common. The young girls are sexually abused by the Lord's Resistance Army officials (LRA) and as a result become child mothers with HIV/AIDS. This abduction by the LRA rebels has retarded girls' education in the Northern part of Uganda.

Culturally, girls are led to believe that one's status as a wife is proportional to the number of male offspring one has; therefore, when girls marry, they tend to produce many children and the situation is worse when one has only girls. Such a girl will go on producing so as to have boys. This in the end leads to increased number of children per woman especially in the rural Uganda. Girls often die of early pregnancy related cases. Poor education for girls has led to low self esteem, low paying jobs, high illiteracy rates, and a host of other problems that prevent girls and women from taking a full and equal part in society.

Agaba (2007) observed that illiterate girls/women typically have less healthy children. There is need to change girls' education status and sense of empowerment. Too often, young girls are subjected to unfair labour practices that begin in childhood and result in fewer chances to prepare for life. Young girls employed as domestic servants in most homes in Uganda have no legal protection and are frequently subjected to prison-like/slave conditions that are sometimes subject to sexual abuse from their employers.

Currently, girls contribute a great deal to their family's economic development, but their contributions go undervalued or unrecognized. Thus, it is evident that there is need for a concerted effort to create awareness of the pressures and impediments girls face; and there is

a continuous need to support educational, community service, and children programs devoted to promoting girl child education.

This paper looks at how the above policies have failures first in general, then in terms of rich/poor, urban/rural disparities, uneven distribution among regions, the situation for girls' university education and schooling matters.

A case study on how poverty and gender link at Kyabugimbi primary school Bushenyi district-Uganda.

The story of Damali a fifteen year old girl

In my study, I had not planned to use a life history, but a young girl I interviewed had a very touching life experience. The story can shed light on how poverty makes girls prisoners in trying to attain some level of education. Damali (fictive name) is a 15 year old girl from Kyabugimbi primary school rural Bushenyi. Damali gave a moving testimony of how she works hard to pay for her school fees. She remembers to have started contributing to her school fees when she was 12 years old and she is now fully responsible for paying her school dues and for her two sisters' fees. Damali's father died ten years ago [1999] and she has since then lived with her mother.

Damali takes up cultivation work from middle class people on Saturdays from six in the morning to around twelve o'clock in the afternoon and there after helps her mother to prepare lunch. After lunch, she relaxes by weaving baskets and mats for sale up to around five o'clock in the evening and she goes with the mother to cultivate for the family and it is her responsibility to do household chores as her two brothers take time to revise since they are in a secondary school. She said that it is her duty to do house work for she abides by what the mother expects her to do. Damali says that her mother can only manage to educate two of her brothers. The reason the mother gave for the kind of behavior is that she lacks money to educate all children and that girls stand better chances of being looked after by the husbands after marriage.

On normal days, Damali wakes up as early as five o'clock in the morning and cultivates in her mother's garden up to seven o'clock and uses thirty minutes to clean the house, wash kitchen utensils and makes sure that by eight o'clock, she is at school. After school, she still uses the evenings to earn some money. She says she gets very tired but then there is nothing

much she can do because she also feels it is important to be in school. However, Damali has no hopes of joining a secondary school since what she earns can only pay for primary education. She has repeated primary seven because she could not raise the money for her secondary education. Damali said that because of such hardships, she may think of getting a husband who can solve her problems.

What message do we get from Damali's story?

The story suggests that girls in Uganda were knowledgeable about their situation and subordination. However, it has been argued by several researchers in line with these findings that perceptions and socio-cultural practices restrict children's individual agency to challenge the cultural ideology, and girls were unable to resist because it is a social construction to be loyal to adult's views and have been socialized in a way that accepts the constraints in society (see Mulegeta, 1998 and Kakonge, 2001). Since marriage is a cultural practice, it appears to be a solution to the hardships girls go through. By resisting doing domestic chores alongside schooling, Damali would be seen as disobedient by society. It is a cultural belief in the study area that when adults complain about a child's behaviors, then the complaint results into a misfortune. However, there was no agreement on how true that is.

Damali's participation in hard work is a ticket of her entry into school as well as for her sisters well being. Her hard work contributes to the understanding of children as active participants (as competent actors) as opposed to passive recipients in the poor societies of Uganda. It also illustrates that children are contributing to the reproduction of society economically. The survival and coping strategies that Damali pursues to turn her deprivation into economic opportunities is her agency. She is in a way bringing change to her constrained life. Damali's competence managed to contribute to the transformation of her well to do life despite the hardships faced.

Also, the case shows that children have some power to make change within a tight schedule. Damali triggers novelty by cultivating for money, doing domestic chores, attending school and cultivating in her mother's garden. She attends school with too much difficulty and is unable to escape poverty through education since she lacks funds to attain post primary education. As Long (1992) puts it, society is composed of actors, thinking agents, capable of strategizing and finding space for maneuver in the situations they face and manipulating resources and constraints. In a way, Damali is manipulating time and labor as resources.

However, it is worth noting that Damali is repressed for she has no free time to play like all children should do. Due to lack of resources in her family the idea of girl's education is seen as an opportunity cost/alternative foregone. Corollary to the above, due to structural constraints, Damali is unable to attain any qualification in the end but to only opt for marriage.

5.2 Challenges to schooling in poor families

The Social Arrangement: Unpacking Multiple and Intersectional Experiences of Girls Intersection of Gender and Rurality

It is hard to trace the linkage between rurality and femininity separate from the class aspect. However, as Azeb (2007) noted that the urban-rural discourse is a significant one and rurality as an identity and experience is treated in comparison to urbanity beyond the class connotation. The guidance and counseling officer notes that:

Girls from rural areas do not share their problems on different issues; they do not express their feelings... Sometimes they leave the university without saying anything... but urban girls are better in expressing themselves (cited in Azeb, 2007:39).

As Azeb (2007) asserted it is quite easy to understand the need of communication and expressing oneself especially living in such a context (both in dormitory and classrooms) and living with people who never know each other before. This narration might be interpreted in two ways. Primarily, it might be interpreted as lack of communication skills by rural girls as a category; in this instance, it would be necessary to explore the process through which rural girls are socialized in their respective environments.

Alternatively, it might be interpreted from discourse of rurality and urbanity since it gives a signal regarding the comparison of the two (ibid 2007).

Azeb (2007) in her paper noted that “ability to express themselves and vivacity may be values by urban girls, and are passports to entering university life but these are conspicuously absent to most of the rural girls. Communication is about relationships between people and is explicitly and/or implicitly determined by the dynamics in the context”(ibid,2007). But in this case we find communication strategies of the rural girls assessed against the backdrop of the normative urban campus environment as Azeb's report (2007) put it:

Most of the time, I fail to understand why they [students] laugh at me. They laugh at the way I dress and make fun on my rural accent. Hence, I don't feel comfortable in communicating freely with students and teachers (Sofia - primary seven pupil from rural area)

Boys categorize us [girls] as 'surilebash' – who wore trousers and 'kemislebash'— who wore skirt. If you wear long skirts, for them, you are traditional (Zinet – primary seven pupils from rural area in Azeb, 2007:39).

In the first narrative, Sofia remains in an incurring relationship with her social environment because of her accent and dressing style. English accent, (official language), differs among students of rural and urban, mainly capital city and big regional towns, areas. Due to its 'traditional' implication, the comments upset rural girls, and even the participants mentioned the presence of conflicts in their dormitory due to the comments (ibid, 2007).

Additionally, the symbolization of 'modernity' by dressing style appears as a line of division as what Zinet said. Wattes and Bridges (2006 in Azeb 2007) state the environment that misrecognizes people's diversity might result into two probable outcomes: isolation or fitting with the dominant one. The first one is manifested in this case by silence (as indicated above) and the other one is explained as follows by the female instructor.

What I understand from my student life and teaching experience is that girls from rural area are easily offended when others comment about their accent or dressing style and then they start to be like them [urban girls], to get approval.... Once they engage in this situation, the damage is endless... because it might lead them to a more miserable life. ... like engaging in sexual relation to show their 'modernity' and to get money as well (Azeb,2007;40).

In Azeb's paper (2007) asserted that adopting modern dressing styles and accent may be options for these girls that enable them to drop the bodily coding of rural others and get inserted into urban campus life. In addition, it can be inferred from the above that girls from rural areas are forced to adopt a sexualized feminine identity, which is a dominant discursive construction of femininity within the education institution and a constructed 'diacritic feature of modernity'. In addition, she added that gender asymmetry is still evident given the way boys categorize girls based on dressing style. The situation reflects the complex social environment in higher education that perhaps might be categorized as 'non-academic' issue (ibid 2007). Clearly as demonstrated here, the university space with its definitions of proper accent, dressing, expectations therefore mediates their experiences as 'rural other'. This feeling of otherness or outsider, symbolic exclusion of rurality is bound to great tension and

has implication on academic performance (ibid 2007). It can have effect on their self-esteem especially because when they are away from their families, peer networks are very important. Thus, it is fair enough to say that the interaction of rurality and gender produces specific rural femininity in the institutional setting (Azeb, 2007; 40)

Spatial location: As an Axis of Social Relation

The concept of rurality is a complex discourse and its themes vary depends on the context of the discussion (Cloke 2006; Bonner, 1997 in Azeb,2007; 36). However, in this paper I took the debate that relate with the ‘otherization’ of rurality (Clock, 2006 in Azeb,2007) and construction of rural identity in relation to discourse of ‘modernization’ (Bonner, 1997 cited in Azeb,2007)). Certainly, the issue of class is linked to the debate of rurality. However, directing the debate to class simplifies the causes of exclusion of rural people. Rural people are marginalized by urban centred development projects (that depends on linear thinking of industrialization) (Arturo, 1992). Over and above, they are labeled as ‘traditional’ in the discourse of ‘modernity’ (Bonner, 1997 in Azeb, 2007).

Thus, the notion of rurality, in this paper, includes these two points. In Uganda, the rural-urban disparity in quality and availability of education is quite significant in regard to girls education, and rural areas have long been deprived of education services making geographical disparity a significant aspect in the question of equity. The low possibility to find schools in the nearby distance (Alem, 2003) makes students to spend most of their time travelling longer distance. The problem of quality education, including school facilities, quality and presence of teachers, textbook availabilities is more aggravated in rural areas (Tassew and Jones, 2006 in Azeb 2007).

In fact, although these situations are common for rural girls and boys, girls are more likely to confront specific problems in relation to security issues when they travel long distance coupled with lack of sufficient study time as they engage in domestic activities and lack of family and community supportive environment (MOE-WAO, 2004 b in Azeb 2007).

On the other hand, although the demographic composition of the country show that rural population account for 80 per cent, higher education is exclusively dominated by upper-class and urban students (Saint, 2004; Teshome, 2007 in Azeb 2007). Hence, as newcomers, rural students are subject to be part of the debate of ‘otherization’ of rurality (Clock, 2006 in Azeb 2007). The current trend of ‘massification’ produces diverse composition of students in education that might be a resource to enrich students by exposing them to diversity and

alternative way of thinking if it is handled with recognition but if there is misrecognition of differences, it might be a tool to reinforce the social inequalities (Azeb, 2007:37).

This case could be associated with what Saint points out about the difficulty of adjusting oneself to the new campus social environment as one of the reason for the presence of high dropout at the first year of study in higher education (Saint, 2004 in Azeb, 2007). Therefore, the study deals with rural/urban background as significant social reality and its effect might be reflected in quality of prior education and marginalization of rural population in provision of education service, and in the discourse of ‘modernity’ that makes the rural girls subject of otherness (ibid,2007). .

Although poor peasants can afford to send their daughters to school with the introduction of UPE and USE, the policy still favours girls of high socio-economic backgrounds. Entry to the university and good secondary schools is still predominantly available to girls from wealthy and above average income groups in both rural and urban areas who attend ‘first world schools’. These girls too are the primary beneficiaries from the 1.5 points bonus for girls applying for university entrance. It is clear that the school’s facilities, the teaching material, the teacher’s experiences and other circumstances also influence performance.

Girls have to compete to enter the so called ‘first world’ schools where high quality education is guaranteed and the poor, especially from rural areas find it difficult to join these schools. As Mugaju (1996:72) argues, ‘this [points bonus policy] has benefited girls from the most prestigious schools in and around Kampala’. More generally, people living in and around the city and other urban centres have much easier access to secondary education than those in the countryside. Only 6% of children of the poorest 25% of families’ complete secondary education compared to 22% from the richest 25% (Rihani et al, 2006). In short, urban children and those from high socioeconomic status are more favored in the education system than children (especially girls) from rural places where educational facilities are insufficient and underdeveloped.

Relatedly, although government has taken concrete steps to address the problems of inequality in access to education, there is still looming disadvantage to the girls. For instance, though UPE claims to be universal, it does not cater for the specific needs of girls. Girls still fail to turn up to school when they are doing family chores or lack appropriate sanitary facilities when they experience their menstrual periods. Some are a target of sexual harassment by their teachers, ‘sugar daddies’ and more are victims of defilement. Some

parents who still believe in providing greater educational opportunities for boys than for girls prefer sending boys to better private schools and girls to low profile UPE schools. As Agaba (2007) asserted:

This low income is affecting both boys and girls. But because we know that our girls get married and develop their husbands' homes, we then prioritize educating boys by selling all the assets in the house with hope that after completing school, they will get jobs and buy more assets for the family. But some families lack even the assets to sell (male parents, semi-urban).

Relatedly, boys are given a priority when a family has financial problems, so that only boys are sent to school.

When parents are too poor, girls should stop going to school because they can help in housework and tilling gardens. The boys can continue their schooling because they cannot do housework compared to girls. The boys cannot do better work compared to the girls. [...] educated girls take riches to the husband's family after marriage. (Rural female parent)

Girls leave school and start work earlier than boys and this is most common in rural areas. When girls come home from school, they are pre occupied by the domestic work which leaves them with no time for revision as compared to boys. Even according to Agaba (2007), she argued this that student from poor families cannot concentrate on their studies

Sometimes the food is not enough at home, so my sisters do not pack anything to school. It is children from well off families that have enough food but most of us don't have enough. It is not possible to study on an empty stomach. In the end children who lack food to pack decide to keep out of school (girl out of school, rural).

This widens the academic gap and when they sit exams, boys perform better than girls. This further increases bias of parents and teachers on girls who refer to them as non performers. These girls eventually become stuck in substandard schools. Bitamazire (2005:10) agrees that,

Since the introduction of formal education in Uganda, there have been disparities in the distribution of facilities for female students, which are best seen between urban and rural areas ... factors behind this disparity include historical ones such

as the presence and influence of missionaries, and cultural factors and the fact that starting schools depended on the community's initiative.

As much as the 1.5 points policy for university entry has increased female university enrolment from 22 per cent in 1989-1990 to 35 per cent in 1990-1991, a gap between girls and boys still remains in what courses they access at university. Many girls do not make it to highly regarded professional and marketable courses (such as medicine, engineering, and the sciences). They end up in the social sciences and the arts, which tends to make them job seekers rather than job makers and subject them to higher levels of unemployment. As a result big number of educated women resort to fleeing the country in search of 'greener pastures'. Even then, they end up doing low status jobs than they qualified for. In explaining these disparities in Uganda:

They blame the girls' psychology for their position in education and the job market and define these in terms of interest and choice rather than recognise those structural forces within the education system, the labour force and the wider culture which help to direct females to their domestic destiny (Kenway, 1990:27).

Regional disparities

Disparities between boys' and girls' education not only exist between urban and rural areas but also between districts and regions. Regional set-up and disparities in Uganda can be traced way back in the colonial period where most schools and other infrastructure were concentrated in the central and southern parts of the country. The Northern part was grossly neglected by the colonial missionaries because people from that region resisted their coming. As a result, when the colonial administrators came, they concentrated development to areas where missionaries had already established infrastructure. Therefore, good schools were established in the central and southern parts of Uganda leaving the Northern part neglected. The post independence governments did not do much to reduce the imbalance. Thus education reform/policies benefit girls from the regions where more schools are located. Girls from the country's North are left in a more disadvantaged position.

The Northern region has lower attendance rates than the central and western parts of Uganda. In 1998, Kitgum District had the lowest proportion of girls enrolled for UPE (40%) while Kampala registered the highest (53%) (MGLSD, 2000). And an estimated 25% of children of primary school going age in northern Uganda are out of school because of the 21 year Kony war (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Report, May 2005). Because of this war, it

is also hard for this region to mobilise finance for education of girls from other sources. From the meagre funds that are mobilised, boys are sent to school. Although there are no official statistics, research suggests that expenditure on schooling in western and central areas is higher than in the North. The effect is that the quality of schooling in the North is substandard compared to that in the central and Western regions.

Worse still the Kalamajong in the North East have their traditional values and practices which do not favour girls education. These people are predominantly nomadic pastoralists. The UPE policy which was developed using the values of fixed communities, failed to address the needs of nomadic people because of their own traditional beliefs, norms and ethics. The policy totally failed in that region which made policy makers redefine the problem by introducing other non-formal educational programs to such unique communities, such as complementary primary education and alternative basic education were offered for Kalamoja.

Settlement in Crisis

As Bitamazire (2005:8) explains:

With the introduction of UPE, there have been a number of challenges which include: low retention and completion rates; lack of due consideration to reading and writing; lack of adequate follow up and inspection; need to retrain teachers, Guidance and Counselling and Life Skills; and the need to revive management training of head teachers and their deputies.

Clearly, education policies in Uganda are in a crisis. There remain high levels of student drop out and the aim of gender parity is not being met when secondary schools are not supported with resources to give greater access to girls, and when there is intentional delay in the release of funds. While USE has been introduced, a lot more is needed. As noted by a Ugandan newspaper, *The Weekly Observer* (2007):

Hardly two months after its inception the Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme appears headed into crisis. Hiccups include; some schools like Kitara SS (649 students) in Hoima district, Gulu SS (509 students), and Sir Samuel Baker (300 students) appearing unwilling to implement some of the agreed upon modalities of the programme, such as the double shift (morning and evening) method proposed for schools with more than 180 students in S.1 (Kiggundu & Zziwa, 2007).

Similarly, according to the Ministry of Education and Sports, “63 percent of pupils in UPE schools, between primary [grades] 1 and 3 ... can neither read nor write” (Kamya, 2006:21). Education performance in terms of pupil’s numeric, reading, and science knowledge and skills has deteriorated following the introduction of UPE. Kamya (2006) claims that, UPE or “Bonna basome” does not deserve the status of an education policy. She argues that the policy should answer the questions - “*basome ki-read what, basome batya-read how, basomere ki-read for what?*” In her opinion, the government does not have adequately coherent answers to these questions. Emphasis is on quantity not quality.

It is no good President Museveni claiming that since the introduction of UPE, 2.9 million pupils have sat for PLE and 2.3 million have passed. Can these newly mint ‘educated’ students string together a cogent sentence in English? Are they numerating? (Kamya, 2006: 22).

According to the National Service Delivery Survey (NSDS, 2004) report released by the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics, high costs, and the absence of a policy to penalize parents who do not send their children to school are some of the reasons cited as keeping many Ugandan girls out of school. Making UPE compulsory should have ensured that children remained in school for the duration of their primary years. However, this has not proven to be the case. No laws are put in place to reduce drop out rates. Pupils start Primary One in big numbers but by Primary Seven, only a handful can be seen in classrooms. This is because from its inception the policy never put in place strong measures governing compulsory attendance. Thus high rates of dropout and low transition still remain significant problems to be addressed.

Another challenge is parents’ attitudes. Despite UPE, some parents still hold their children back from attending school for the purposes of offering free labour to generate income for the family. They regard UPE and USE policies as a waste of time. Yet, when pupils leave school early some can find it difficult to get jobs; a situation that is well understood by a growing number of parents. ‘When my granddaughter reached primary five I got her a job in Kampala as a house girl and she is always earning, she even got me a great grand child recently’ (Monitor, 2006). In Karamoja, parents believe that if their daughters attain formal education they will become less competent wives, prostitutes or run off to marry non-Karimojong men who will divert them from the Karimojong ways of life. Girls stay at home to do domestic

chores or in odd jobs within town to get money for food. When they turn 13, they are married off (New vision, 2006).

Still, challenges remain to the education of girls in Uganda. For example, while rich and poor families from rural and urban areas are treated equally and the costs of education are the same for all, the costs of buying uniforms, providing teachers' lunch, and textbooks/scholastic materials tend to increase girls' dropout rates because the little income that families receive is devoted to sending boys to school first.

Another challenge is the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Throughout the country there are currently 880,000 AIDS orphans under 15 years of age. It is girls who are often required to stay at home to care for sick and dying relatives and also to take over parenting roles vacated by their departed guardians. Also a study in Uganda identified a high level of abuse of girls. 85.8 per cent of girls have been abused by their mother or stepmother and step fathers (Plan International 2007) who affect their schooling. Further, facilities (as basic as sanitation and water) for girls and children with special problems in learning are still inadequate in the majority of schools across the country, which forces girls to drop out of school.

A look at the quality of teachers and their distribution reveals another area of challenge and crisis facing the education of girls in Uganda. While there are tremendous pressures on educational infrastructure to cope with the sudden influx of pupils into primary schools, inflexible school calendars, poorly trained and inadequate teachers and low quality learning processes are also a hindrance. For example, the first year of UPE saw the highest pupil-teacher ratio ranging from 100 to over 300 pupils per teacher (Bategeka, 2005:7). And many of these teachers were inadequately prepared, not just for the large numbers but more importantly for the intellectual work of being a teacher. As Bategeka (2005:7) puts it:

In 2003, there were 145,703 primary school teachers of whom 54,069 or 37% had no formal training as teachers (comprised of persons with ordinary level certificate, primary education, and not stated qualifications). An additional 7,960 were trained teachers but with just a teaching certificate obtained after training on completion of primary education. Most of these had retired but were recalled into the teaching service due to shortage of teachers after the introduction of UPE.

The majority of these unqualified and under-qualified teachers are deployed in rural areas. Moreover, many are unwilling to engage in professional development as they believe that, ‘to be a teacher is to die poor’ and ‘teaching is a woman’s profession’.

Ssebaana (2007) contends that Uganda’s educational system, which was once the envy of many in East and Central Africa, is now bedevilled by a host of intractable problems. While enrolments have improved, especially in primary schools, teacher numbers are not adequate to handle the large number of students, in part because the recent proposal to recruit more teachers fell through because of financial constraints on the Ministry’s budget (Kiggundu & Zziwa, 2007). This is despite the fact that salaries of teachers and other staff are extremely low at all levels of education. Classroom, laboratory, workshop and other types of teaching space as well as scholastic materials and equipment are grossly inadequate from primary school to university level.

There are also issues to do with the timely disbursement of available funds to school and shoddy work in infrastructure development. Some classrooms that were constructed were collapsing before completion of construction. These have rendered policies ineffective (Monitor, 2006). As Gale (2006:36) stresses, an analyst should ask not only: “Have enough resources been allocated for the policy to be implemented?” but also “Are resources made available when needed?” In this case, in addition to inputs not increasing sufficiently to cope with expansion in student numbers, the available funds tend not to be released in time. There have been cases where some schools have gone almost a term before funds are received. One wonders how such schools are expected to operate:

‘Some head teachers included ‘ghost’ pupils on the school roster to access more funds, while others extorted money from pupils using various underhand methods that came in the form of lunch fees, uniforms, building fees’ (Kamya, 2006:24).

Conclusion

In this paper, Gale’s (2001) critical policy historiography was used to show differences and to explore the changes and the relationships between these different political settlements in Ugandan girls’ schooling policies. This showed the changes in girls’ schooling settlements and provided the relationship between these political settlements in different historical periods. We explored how in different historical periods, policies varied. We also discussed whose interests were promoted and who were marginalised in these settlements and the complexities involved. All periods are interrelated.

Policies of girls' schooling have changed the lives of many Ugandans and have reduced the illiteracy rate. Their intentions are beginning to bear fruits. However, we have noted many areas which need improvement. Policies were hurriedly taken up when the government had not done enough ground work in terms of resource mobilization. That is why for instance, UPE was not all inclusive or universal at the beginning. Roles of stakeholders too should be clearly defined so that the problem of laxity in implementation does not reoccur.

Based on the above therefore, as educationists and advocates for girl child education, we have to voice the plight of young girls who have remained entangled in the strings of cultural values and poverty. These policies should be backed by strong legislation in order to live up to its expectation as universal education policies without discrimination. The intentions of the government should be supported by strong political commitment backed by a strategic vision and framework by key ministries, local government, finance for the public service and education, and the international community so that policies run smoothly and do not become a victim of globalization. Universalisation and globalization should be seen as two concepts working together to improve the wellbeing of the marginalized groups, especially the girl child in the developing world. Promoting gender equality and empowering women are unachievable without a global commitment to enforcing international laws that protect girls' rights. 'Gender equality can't be reached overnight. It's a massive goal that everyone needs to agree to ... people just need to get off their behinds and do something about it' (Plan International, 2007:9). Gender equity should not be seen narrowly as a women's issue but as an issue that requires men and women to work together. With patience, persistence, commitment and wholehearted belief in the value of women in Uganda, girls will take their place in building a just nation.

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Note: This version of the paper is slightly amended from that uploaded in August 2010. This slightly revised version was uploaded in Dec 2010

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