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Factors Behind Consistent Decline in Uce Performance: A Comparison of Secondary Schools in Eastern and Central regions of Uganda

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Abstract
This study aimed at determining the factor affecting UCE performance in Eastern Uganda in relation to Central Region. The study was specifically conducted to establish three objectives including, assessing the trend of performance of UCE in Eastern region in comparison to Central Region in Uganda, examining the family factors affecting UCE performance in Eastern Uganda, establishing the environmental and cultural factors affecting UCE performance in Eastern Uganda and assessing the school based factors affecting UCE performance in Eastern Uganda. The study was conducted as a cross section employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study targeted 4874 individual including students and parents of respondents, former students, class teachers and head teachers and district local leaders in both Mukono and Iganga District. The study employed structured questionnaires, interviews and documentary review in collecting data. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was done by identifying common themes based on the objectives of the study, while quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Most of the factors that were identified applied to both regions as the central region has a significant number or people from other parts of the country. However, some factors were more prevalent in the Eastern region. Among the factors that were found to bring about consistent decline in academic performance in eastern region included gender-based inequality, low government financing, family economic status and policy related factors. Overall, the study concluded that the central region is better equipped to offer quality education due to availability of a better infrastructure and staff remuneration. There is thus a need to ensure that Eastern Region is equipped with the required resources in terms of physical infrastructure, competent and enough teachers, increased funding, increased supervision of USE and technological innovations required in improving quality of USE.
KEY WORDS: *Educational inequality; Gender; Quality of life; Secondary schools, Comparative study*
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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

World over education is considered a strong pillar to development and as such every individual Nations strive to ensure quality education is achieved through increased students' performance. Government of Uganda conscious of different actors in the provision of secondary introduced Universal Secondary Program in mid-2000. The program with corresponding policies provided leverage to the actors to take their roles that would translate to good performance at all levels of secondary education. For instance the program policy documents put responsibility areas for the family especially the parents to support their children basic school requirements including moral uprightness. Equally the individual schools drew programs that would support learners to achieve academically. External and internal supervision as means to create everlasting condusive learning environment have been ensured through creating independent quality assurance directorate of Education almost at the same time when USE was introduced.

Despite Universal Secondary Education (USE) in public schools in Uganda, some children of school-going age are not accessing education at all (Kasente, 2013). Those who have accessed it have experienced educational inequalities due to a number of factors and the drop-out rate has been noted to be high in many schools around Eastern region compared to central part of the country (UNESCO, 2015).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed at assessing the determinants of consistent decline in UCE performance and education quality in Eastern Uganda and specifically investigated the following.

i) To examine the family factors affecting UCE performance in Eastern Uganda

ii) To establish the environmental factors affecting UCE performance in Eastern Uganda

iii) To assess the school based factors affecting UCE performance in Eastern Uganda

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several authors have regenerated determinants to students performance and linked them to family school and physical learning environment. For instance South African literature discusses a number of different determinants of dropout of school factors such as family structure, financial constraints, and shocks including loss of employment, death and pregnancy among others (Grant & Behrman, 2010). High levels of inequality and dropout rates being registered in a number of schools around the country, contradicts the UNESCO report, which suggests that there is hope that fewer young women in Uganda will be left lacking skills for work in the future because of having attained education (UNESCO, 2015). In Uganda, according to the education system, after primary education one is supposed to continue to secondary education as no skills can be attained at this level, thus the introduction of USE. It is after secondary education that one can enroll for a practical course such as carpentry, hairdressing or tailoring depending on one's' interest and ability. The Ugandan education system follows a 7-4, 2-4 patterns: seven years of primary education, followed by four years of lower secondary or "Ordinary" level, two years of upper secondary or "Advanced" level, and four more years of tertiary education for those who can afford (MOES, 2016). However, due to factors such as financial constraints, or early marriage, many students drop out of school along the way in Eastern Uganda than central Part of the country (Kasente, 2013).

Further, poor educational outcomes at the school level are a result of a series of complex and interrelated factors, both within and outside the school system. For those students who have attained secondary education, but have experienced inequality in education while at school, getting employment after school has been hard, resulting into a poor quality of life which is highly observed among students from Eastern region of Uganda which demotivates others from going on with education to higher levels (Mulongo, 2012). The socio-economic backgrounds of the students and parents contribute significantly to underperformance leading to inequality (Novelli, 2016). Research has established a base of knowledge about the harmful effects of disadvantageous circumstances on education and health (Novelli, 2016). Therefore it is disheartening if a student completes school and fails to get employment having incurred a lot of costs.

Moreover, families in Eastern Uganda tend to have a number of children as the fertility rate stands at 5.8 whereas Central at 5.2%, Northern at 4.8% and Western Uganda at 5.4% (UBOS, 2016). Just like in other parts of Uganda, employers, when screening potential candidates for vacant positions, are more interested in their educational qualification and skills and not any other characteristics such as cultural background or social connections (Kagolo, 2017). Accordingly, employers are likely to, evaluate additional 'signals', such as field of study, type of institution or program level in potential candidates for vacant positions(Mugasha, 2011). It is for this reason that most families in Uganda, prefer to send their children to privately owned schools which are highly rated in terms of educational standards while, for low income families their children mainly go to government owned schools whose educational standards in most cases do not match the privately owned schools. For the poor families in Eastern region who cannot afford to send their children to school, the option is to stay at home and engage in different activities some of which generate income to supplement on the family expenditure. This has been highly evident in Namiyingo and Bugiri districts in Busoga Region which rank highly in child labor especially in mining of stones and sand. Kaliro, Buyende and Mayuge also rank highly with over 33% children engaged in the growing of sugarcane. This has accelerated educational inequalities between the rich and the poor (Waiswa & Kiberu, 2015). Research in Eastern Uganda indicates that in poor families girls lag behind boys by 20% in enrolment at secondary level and the gap widens further at tertiary and university levels where cost and gender become important factors in determining access to education (Naturinda, 2013). Girls have also remained strongly disadvantaged in education mainly in Eastern region compared to other regions like central and western region (Okurut, 2016).

The high rate of poor performances in secondary schools was observed in rural areas mainly in the Eastern Uganda. With the 2017 UCE examinations already finished, it has been noticed with poor performances of last year's worst ranked districts in Uganda (Kween, Bulambuli, Bukwo, Kaliro, Luuka, Iganga, Buyende, Bugiri, Bududa, Namutumba). Apart from Kween, Bulambuli and Bukwo, the rest are in Busoga sub-region. Let's take a review to some of the reasons to have been the cause of the poor performance in the schools of these districts as periodically indicated in special reports:

- "The pupils report for first term and only return in the third term, to sit for Uganda Certificate Examinations (UCE).". They had gone to earn money from sugarcane plantations. In Busoga, some farmers abandon food production for sugarcane growing, but the recent high UCE failure rate is evidence that pupils are also abandoning school to work as casual laborers in sugarcane plantations.
- Ms Jessica Alupo, blamed the poor performance on sugar plantations and fishing around Busoga region which lure children out of school into employment.
- Ms Alupo attributed the large discrepancy in rural-urban performance to the increased absenteeism of both teachers and pupils in rural schools and lack of facilities.

The minister also cited other reasons such as – poor supervision of school teachers, parents allowing their children to engage in commercial activities like fishing and sugarcane growing during class time and a raging epidemic of jiggers in Busoga.

- Some pupils performed poorly because their parents failed to provide them with lunch or scholastic items like pens and books," George Tigawalana, the Iganga district inspector of schools, said.
- Pupils in Kamuli district are either involved in rice growing or fishing, instead of attending classes, according to Joseph Musoke, the district education officer. Out of a total of 110,101 pupils who sat for UCE last year, Kamuli registered 580 first grades, while 1,956 students failed, while 341 registered, but did not sit the examinations.
- Teachers and parents force children to sit for exams after being out of school the whole year. You cannot expect miracles from such children," says Musoke.
- He faults some parents who marry off their daughters while they are still at school. "Girls usually fail to sit for UCE because they are married off by their parents, while others get pregnant." However, he adds that the low number of teachers is also to blame.
- Lydia Chekwel, the Kween district's Woman Member of Parliament, notes that most of the schools are under UCE and that most of the pupils who passed were from private schools. Chekwel says teachers in UCE schools do not reside at the schools. "They, therefore, report to work late and leave earlier than they should because they walk long distances back home. So when will they ever cover the syllabus?"
- -These schools follow the policy that no pupil should repeat under UCE, but in some cases, the pupils are too weak," says Chekwel.

A broader approach, could help in better understanding of the ways in which education systems relate to the production of inequality in complex and contradictory ways. Educational research is needed to address these needs to ask questions on the governance, coordination and management of the education sector as well as its content, teaching and outcomes in Eastern art of Uganda which has showed consistent decline in performance whereby its prominent schools like Busoga Mwiri College has lost a first slot in the best performing schools in Uganda (Kagolo, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a cross section research design which was comparative in nature. It was also desirable to use the design because it allowed reaching out the various category of respondents once in a shorter period of time. The study was conducted using mixed methods approach. The study targeted 4874 students in secondary schools in Mukono and Iganga Districts representing Central and Eastern Regions Respectively (MOES Statistic, 2017). 4874 students formed sampling framework, and 357 were determined using Morgan and Krejcie (1970). In this study, primary data were mainly collected through interviews and structured questionnaires. Key informants included, 15 parents of respondents, 18 former students of the schools where respondents were still students, 26 class teachers and 9 head teachers from the selected schools, 4 district local leaders giving a total of 72 key informants. Ten (10) secondary schools were sampled from Mukono district in central Uganda, and Iganga in Eastern Uganda, with each district being represented by five (5) secondary schools. Out of the schools selected, 40% were private, while 60% were government owned. Purposive sampling was used to select all the study participants, both respondents and key informants. Simple random sampling was used in determining students who participated in the study and questionnaire guide administered to generate their opinion. Document review was also used in collecting data used in the third. Data were collected by the third author with the assistance of trained research assistants. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was done by identifying common themes based on the objectives of the study, while quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS

We begin by presenting the views and responses of all participants from selected schools in both central and Eastern Uganda regarding UCE performance. Most of the findings are presented in a qualitative form, while others are in a quantitative form as percentages. Demographic characteristics of the current student respondents and the findings helped to explain the differences in the regional educational inequalities and the quality of life.

TREND ANALYSIS OF UCE PERFORMANCE

It was established from documents reviewed on how Eastern Uganda has been performing in UCE in comparison to other regions in Uganda. Table 1 below has more details.

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Eastern Region	12.1%	9.8%	8.8%	10.3%	14.1%	13.3%	14%	14.2%	15.7%
Central Region	3.1%	2.7%	3.3%	2.6%	2.3%	3.8%	1.4%	3.7%	2.2%
Northern Region	10.13%	10.8%	11.3%	9.4%	10%	12.2%	13.5%	11.7%	12.9%
Western Region	4.2%	4.5%	3.8%	3.1%	3.2%	4.3%	3.2%	4.1%	3.3%

Further, it was established that schools in Eastern Uganda were found to have more students in class, totaling up to 199 students (56%) as compared to those in central Uganda with 159 (44%). In the study girls were 148 (41%) and boys 210 (59%), and the ratio of boys to girls was relatively higher in all the schools. The average age for students was 17 years, and majority of the students commuted to school while others resided at school. Only 11% of the students had ever attempted to drop out of school, majority of them being from Iganga in Eastern region. The major reasons for dropping out or attempting to do so include lack of school fees, scholastic materials, looking after siblings and forced marriages, among others. Such factors were also identified to be associated with school drop-out in South Africa (Novelli, 2016). With regard to parents' or guardians' level of education, 43% of the students noted that their parents/guardians had attained secondary education. In Italy, people who have attained good education and from better families have an advantage over those who do not have such opportunities and as a result get good employment opportunities and send their children to good schools where they acquire better skills thus minimizing social inequality in a way (Strassburg & Russel, 2010).

Table 2.1 Attendance Rates by Quintile of the per capita Expenditure Distribution
Uganda 2002 and 2015

	6 - 12 years			6 - 8 years			9 - 12 years			13-18 years		
Quintile	**All**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**All**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**All**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**All**	**Girls**	**Boys**
2002												
Total	**66.5**	**64.2**	**68.7**	**55.6**	**53.1**	**58.0**	**76.8**	**74.6**	**78.8**	**12.0**	**10.9**	**13.0**
1	50.2	45.7	53.9	37.2	33.5	40.5	62.3	58.0	65.7	2.6	2.4	2.8
2	62.2	58.7	65.4	50.5	47.3	53.4	73.6	69.7	77.2	6.2	4.9	7.4
3	68.5	66.5	70.5	54.7	51.5	57.9	81.6	81.0	82.2	9.2	9.1	9.3
4	73.7	70.9	76.3	65.2	62.9	67.2	81.8	78.1	85.6	14.5	11.9	17.5
5	84.2	83.1	85.5	79.0	77.6	80.4	88.8	87.6	90.2	27.5	24.1	31.3
2015												
Total	**88.1**	**88.4**	**87.7**	**80.7**	**81.4**	**80.1**	**93.6**	**93.5**	**93.7**	**21.9**	**23.5**	**20.4**
1	78.8	78.9	78.8	67.1	68.1	66.2	87.7	86.7	88.7	4.5	6.4	2.8
2	85.8	86.0	85.5	76.0	75.5	76.5	94.1	95.1	93.1	11.8	11.5	12.1
3	89.7	90.1	89.3	81.9	82.1	81.7	95.8	95.9	95.7	17.4	19.3	15.7
4	93.0	93.3	92.7	89.6	91.2	88.0	95.5	95.0	96.1	22.5	23.4	21.5
5	94.5	94.7	94.3	92.9	93.7	92.1	95.6	95.4	95.9	44.7	44.8	44.6

*All figures are percentages of respective age group.
Source: Computations from UIHS 2002 and UNHS 2015/2016 data

Our empirical analysis is based on the 2002 and 2015 nationally representative household surveys combined with two community surveys for the same years[1]. From the original datasets we retain a sample 16,607

[1] *The sampling frame is based on a two-stage sampling design and relies on information from the most recent Census. Enumeration areas (EA) are selected at the first stage and households are randomly drawn from each selected EA. The 2002 UIHS was conducted between March 2002 and March 2003 by the Statistics Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning within the context of the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA)*

individuals who were between 6 and 18 years old in 2002, and 14, 984 individuals of the same age group in 2015. In addition to the household/individual level information, we also merge the two surveys with a community level questionnaire that contains extra information about the level of development of the community that can be used as controls in our model. For example, we will use existence of primary and secondary (either public or private) school in the community and the average of fees paid in the community as controls later on in our analysis of correlation of fees paid and school attendance.

Table 2.2 School Attendance and Reasons for Non-Attendance by Region
Uganda 2002 and 2015

	Uganda	Rural	Urban	Center	East	North	West
2002							
School attendance							
6-12 year olds in primary school (%)	66.5	64.6	82.2	78.8	67.1	51.6	65.0
6- 8 year olds in primary school (%)	55.6	52.7	79.2	72.2	52.9	37.7	55.4
9-12 year olds in primary school (%)	76.8	75.7	85.1	85.0	80.3	65.1	73.8
13-18 year olds in primary school (%)	43.6	45.0	34.9	38.5	45.1	50.8	42.1
13-18 year olds in secondary school (%)	12.0	9.1	29.0	18.5	10.8	8.0	8.5
Reasons for never attending/dropping out*							
Calamity in family, pregnancy, disabled	1.2	0.8	6.6	3.2	0.8	0.5	1.0
Lack of interest	49.2	49.5	45.2	44.9	51.5	50.3	48.6
Need to work	1.7	1.7	2.1	0.3	0.8	4.2	0.7
Cost of attendance	42.1	42.0	43.5	45.5	42.4	36.1	46.7
Transport/distance	3.3	3.4	0.7	3.7	2.3	5.0	1.8
Poor quality of school	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.2
Other	2.2	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.7	3.8	1.0
Number of individuals (6-18 years)	16,607	11,027	5,580	4,427	4,172	4,089	3,919
2015							
School attendance							
6-12 year olds in primary school (%)	88.1	87.4	92.1	92.7	89.7	79.2	88.4
6- 8 year olds in primary school (%)	80.7	79.5	89.2	89.4	81.5	67.7	81.2
9-12 year olds in primary school (%)	93.6	93.6	94.1	95.0	96.2	88.4	93.7
13-18 year olds in primary school (%)	57.1	61.2	35.7	45.1	62.4	64.9	60.8
13-18 year olds in secondary school (%)	21.9	18.4	40.0	31.7	22.4	10.3	18.1
Orphans (%)	5.5	7.3	5.2	4.9	7.5	3.2	6.9
Children with one alive parent (%)	16.7	16.4	18.6	19.8	14.9	15.8	15.6
Reasons for never attending/dropping out*							
Calamity in family, pregnancy, disabled	7.5	7.5	8.0	11.4	9.5	5.1	6.8
Lack of interest	56.3	58.8	26.9	29.9	73.7	57.0	57.6
Need to work	8.9	9.3	4.2	3.8	2.5	17.9	4.0
Cost of attendance	12.8	10.1	44.7	36.1	6.5	4.7	15.4
Transport/distance	5.8	6.3	0.0	5.4	2.6	4.6	11.0
Poor quality of school	1.2	1.3	0.5	4.1	0.2	0.7	1.1
Orphaned/displaced	1.1	0.9	3.8	0.6	1.6	1.4	0.5
Other	6.3	5.8	11.9	8.7	3.5	8.6	3.5
Number of individuals (6-18 years)	14,984	11,895	3,089	3,975	4,087	3,238	3,684

Source: Computations from UIHS 2002 and UNHS 2015/2006 data
* Percentages for reasons for non-attendance refer to children 6-12 years old

project supported by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). It covers 10 thousand households and 50 thousand individuals. The 2015 UNHS is the latest one available and was carried out by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) between May 2015 and April 2016 with financial support from the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It contains information for 7.5 thousand households and 43 thousand individuals. The data are organized in five modules: Socioeconomic, Agriculture, Community, Price, and a Qualitative module designed to provide information for a deeper understanding of the issues covered in the quantitative modules.

Table 2.1 presents attendance rates by quintile of the distribution of per capita expenditure for both 2002 and 2015. For each year and each socioeconomic group considered here, the data clearly show that attendance is an increasing function of household income. Focusing on 2002, prior to the introduction of UPE, we note a big gap between the poor and the non-poor. The attendance rate for the poorest quintile in the 6-12-year old group is about 50 percent compared to 84 percent for the richest. A similar gap is observed for the other age groups as well. The data also reveal a gender bias for all age groups and income levels. Attendence rates are consistently higher for boys than for girls.

Comparing 2002 attendance rates with 2015 reveals a significant increase in overall attendance among primary school age children (6-12 years old) and that of the poor. At the bottom quintile, attendance rate has increased by more than 28 percentage points (from 50.2 percent in 2002 to 78.8 percent in 2015). However, the gap between the bottom and the top quintile does not seem to be narrowing. The gender difference in attendance seems to have disappeared in 2015. As noted in the introduction, one of the education policy objectives in Uganda is to get students to enroll at the right age. The age of enrolment is indeed a key determinant of dropout rates. Focusing now on the 6-8-year age group, we note that they have the lowest attendance rates both in 2002 and 2015 compared with the 9-12-year age group. However, the enrolment rate seems to have gone up significantly, jumping from 37 percent in 2002 to about 81 percent in 2015. Attendance rates for secondary school age children (13-18 years old) did also increase between 2002 and 2015. The increase, however, does not seem as dramatic as for the case of primary school age children. While there was a gap between boys and girls in 2002, this seems to have disappeared in 2015. Overall, the enrolment rate for girls is somewhat higher than that of boys (23.5 percent versus 20.4 percent).

Table 2.2 presents information on attendance and reasons for non-attendance by region. There is a bias in favor of urban residents both for the 6-12-year and the 13-18-year age groups. For the primary school age group this bias has shrunk significantly between 2002 and 2015. The difference between enrolment rate for urban children and that of rural children decreased from about 18 percent in 2002 to about 5 percent in 2015. For the secondary school age children, this difference remained at about 20 percent[2]. Looking at the regional distribution of attendance, we note that for both years, the Central Region has the highest attendance rates for all age groups while the Northern Region has the lowest.

The information about the reasons for non-attendance or dropping out reveals two key determinants of this outcome: lack of interest and the cost of attendance. However, the importance of cost as a reason for not attending school has significantly declined. The overall percentage of children non-attending school for cost-related reasons decreased from 42 percent in 2002 to about 13 percent in 2015. The urban-rural comparison shows that the level of this constraint has not changed in the urban areas and has not declined much for the Central Region (going from about 46 percent in 2002 to about 36 percent in 2015). Lack of interest remains a severe constraint to attendance. The overall score for this factor increased from 49 percent in 2002 to 56 percent in 2015. Looking at the regional distribution we note that it decreased only for the Central Region, moving from 45 percent in 2002 to 30 percent in 2015

These observed trends in enrolment suggest that the UPE policy may have induced a dramatic increase in primary school attendance, but (as noted earlier) may have also led to a decline in the quality of education. For policy analysis it is important to ascertain that this is not due to some diffuse change in the overall socioeconomic environment. We need to determine the extent to which the outcome can be attributable to the policy shift.

FAMILY FACTORS AFFECTING UCE PERFORMANCE IN EASTERN REGION

Over 86% of the respondents and key informants in both central and Eastern Uganda alluded to the fact that the family economic status is responsible for educational differences in terms of attainment and completion. In this regard, lack of school fees was identified as the key factor responsible for dropout rates in Eastern region schools. The number of family members who depend on the family head to provide for their necessities was also identified as an impediment to attaining quality educational. Over 82% of the respondents identified this factor by stating that the more the family members, the more family expenditures are divided among many competing demands, leaving less for quality education. This factor was more common in Iganga where families are relatively larger compared to those in Mukono. The education level of the family head was also a key catalyst to educational inequality, and it was noted that the family head made most of the decisions regarding who should

[2] *These observations are consistent with those made by Deininger (2003) when comparing the situation in 2002 with that prevailing in 1999. He observes a reduction of the urban bias in access to primary education and no change in the bias for access to secondary education.*

go to which school, and the quality of support given to the student in terms of scholastic materials. Research indicates that family factors have an immense significance on educational inequality as one's family background and socio-economic status can be a means to predict educational success or failure of achieving or completing quality education.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING UCE PERFORMANCE IN EASTERN REGION

Social class inequalities in different schools, was also identified to bring about educational inequality, as stated by 81% of respondents from both regions. One key informant from Iganga, agreed with the respondents, and gave the following response:

> *Here student leaders are given special privileges, for example any function outside school, is only attended by leaders.*

Findings state that chances of children going to school in the Democratic Republic of Congo are heavily influenced by whether they live in a conflict zone, and whether they are rich or poor. Both respondents and key informants (81%) indicated that government support and involvement in school increases its achievement and performance. In Mukono, 73% of the key informants reported to have been supervised by the District Education Officer or any other member from the ministry as compared to only 41% in Iganga who reported to have been supervised by government authorities. Moreover, private schools were more highly monitored and supervised by both ministry staff and communities compared to government schools.

Other factors related to educational inequalities included gender, ethnic and social cultural factors, and these were reported to have been experienced by students mostly in Iganga. Respondents reported gender based educational inequality to be at 60%, however, key informants denied existence of any form of gender educational discrimination, as one of them stated:

> *In our school girls are more than boys but equal treatment is provided to all irrespective of their gender. This contradicts what one respondent in Mukono said: ...girls are discouraged from taking on science subjects like Physics and Mathematics and instead encouraged to do art subjects especially Fine Art, Literature and History.*

Overall it was found that gender inequalities are catalyzed by traditional beliefs and socialization at the family level where girls are brought up to do most of the domestic chores in the home which may even affect their time for learning. According to gender role socialization, children acquire the gender stereotypes and norms prevalent within families and educational institutions in the course of developing a gender identity. Parents and educators may have gender biased perceptions of children's abilities and performance, for example that boys have a better grasp on technical questions or mathematics. Such agrees with similar findings, in other countries where 14% of the women (7-16 years old) had never been to school.

One key informant gave this response:

> *In some communities people still consider education to be for boys and not girls. So, if there is not enough money, the boys will go to school first and the girls will sit and wait until when the parents get money or end up getting married, thus contributing to the differences in performance between boys and girls and also increased early marriage for girls.*

A study by UNESCO, indicates that in Congo among the poor families in Katanga region, 44% of the girls, had never been to school, compared with 17% of boys in the same region. However, contrary to this, research indicates that gender inequality in western societies has recently started to reverse; in particular, girls are overtaking boys in all stages of the educational career.

The Eastern regions have Beta of 0.563, implying a unit increase in educational inequality will decrease economic status by 56% thereby reducing the quality of life. Accordingly, inequality in education achievement and earning inequality are correlated, within the United States and across countries. Majority of key informants in the study agreed that, there is a high level of educational inequality in most schools in form of economic status. Students from poor families generally felt that they were not treated the same way as those from rich and moderate families. One respondent from Iganga said that:

> *I was insulted by a classmate that we are poor and I am always sent back home for school fees and simple things like brooms and toilet papers. I felt so bad and I didn't want to study in the same school with the student who insulted me.*

Additionally, over 86% of the respondents said that rich students have better scholastic materials such as textbooks as compared to their counter parts from less privileged families, and as such, perform better at school. Research findings state that students from poor families are likely to perform poorly compared to those from rich families. In Europe, parents from upper social classes take advantage of the best educational options to make the transition to the labor market with better rewarded credentials. Interviews with key informants from both

regions, found out that even when a student misses some days to attend school because he or she has been sent back home due to school fees, such a student may not compete favorably with one who has not missed school at all.

A key informant in Iganga said:

> *Because of income problems, feeding at school are also challenging since the fees is fixed and the prices of food keep fluctuating. Even the Parents' Teachers' Association fund is inadequate and the differences in income levels limit children from low income families from progressing on to upper classes.*

The poor afford lowest performing schools and achieve poorest outcome and poverty is strongly associated with low attainment. Therefore, education has not transformed the life of the poor and disadvantaged but has only brought about some modest improvement in some families.

On the other hand, in Iganga findings revealed that some parents engage their children in domestic chores such as rearing of domestic animals, which leaves them no time to attend school while, in Mukono, the study found out that children near fishing areas usually drop out of school and opt to engage in fishing so as to as to get quick money. Overall, the dropout rate was found higher in Eastern Uganda than in central Uganda. According to 68% of the respondents, the quality of education and the type of school attended determine the job one does and thus impact on the quality of life, which implies that there is a positive correlation between the school attended and the job one does. Results from other studies indicate that parents who are financially well off, take their children to good (normally private) schools that offer quality education and as such, give students better chances of finding more employment opportunities.

Quality of life depends on economic ability, therefore, children of the poor receive inferior education and consequently, are condemned to lesser professions and lower employment status [9,20]. Educational inequality in Iganga was found to be higher compared to Mukono, and this greatly affects the quality of life of the student after school. At primary level, achievement rates and completion rates are lower in the Eastern region of Uganda as compared to the central region. Key informants indicated that in Eastern Uganda, not many students take on science subjects which may give them opportunities to compete favorably for highly skilled jobs such as doctors, and engineers which are also related to attainment of a higher quality of life and increased income.

Majority of respondents (77%) indicated that the quality of education and the level attained determine the social class of an individual and this can be explained by the fact that some highly rated schools have strong associations that even extend beyond school life thereby increasing social networks and thus improvement in social capital. In Italy, similar findings cite the importance of social-networks in providing a wide range of opportunities for finding employment. A key informant from Iganga reported: If someone went to a poor school, they are likely to continue associating with a class of poor people and even the social network will be of people from a poor class compared to those from highly rated schools with no inequalities and a wider net-work. Educational inequality was further found to have an impact on the self-esteem of students who experienced it as revealed by a key informant from Mukono: In case of young girls, they are easily deceived by men and they have no choice but to accept and the cycle will continue. This is mostly common in village schools where the girls do not have assertive skills.

According to the study findings, more schools in Mukono as compared to those from Iganga had well established old student's associations which help students from their former schools extend their interactions and networks beyond different places resulting into higher social capital. This has not only benefited the members through connecting them to employment opportunities, but also helped in pooling of funds that have helped them engaged in small-scale businesses for improved standards of living. Old student's associations in Iganga are still small and some schools did not have such associations, thus it was somehow difficult to truck former students of those schools. The findings are in agreement with earlier studies which indicate that the education system reproduces the class system.

SCHOOL BASED FACTORS AFFECTING UCE PERFORMANCE IN EASTERN REGION

Contributing significantly to student performance are, preschool education, and the availability of reading textbooks among others. In the current study, both respondents and key informants stated that a number of school based factors such as a good infrastructure in form of laboratories, improved and well stocked libraries tend to motivate and enable students to read more and comprehend what has been taught in class better than their counterparts who lack such facilities. In South Africa, indicators of quality of education and organizational capacity available to perform effective change management functions have been identified. Schools are

classified into high-functioning, low-functioning, and non-functioning institutions, and research concludes that schools that are either low or non-functioning, have a low performance of the learners. Furthermore, in South Africa, where the infrastructure and other facilities are lacking, educational inequalities are likely to increase. In relation to this factor, facilities such as laboratories, libraries and washrooms, among others, were found responsible for educational inequalities in Iganga despite having good classroom and administration blocks. The study further revealed that in the exams of (2014), 15% of the students who sat for Ordinary Level exams (O-Level) got U-Grade compared to only 6% in Mukono.

While on the other hand, findings also indicated that at Senior Six, (A-Level) about 3% of those who sat in (2014) in Iganga got no principal pass compared to only 1% in Mukono, giving a mean of 11 and 5 in relation to performance for Iganga and Mukono, respectively. One key informant also observed that availability of teachers improves student performance as well and as such, teachers need to reside near the school premises such that students find it easier to consult whenever necessary. He gave this response: In our school, only five teachers stay within the school and the majority rent outside. This limits the time available for students to consult with their teachers since most teachers disappear immediately after teaching. A student who consults a teacher outside classroom time tend to comprehend better what they have been taught in class. Schools that lack facilities such as reading materials produce students with poor reading habits and culture and this affects their quality of education. About 86% of the study respondents also affirmed that the differences in class sizes are also responsible for the educational inequalities in secondary schools. According to findings from the study, schools with inadequate numbers of teachers perform poorly compared to those that have adequate numbers. This leads to incomplete syllabus coverage as one teacher in Iganga noted: You cannot expect a student who has not finished the syllabus to compete favorably with one who has covered the whole syllabus and even has done some revision with the guidance of the teachers.

Another school based factor identified regarding educational inequality was motivation and payment of the teaching and non- teaching staff. Much as it is expected that teachers in, government owned schools are to be paid uniform salaries, the study found big deviations in this. Teachers in Iganga based government schools were found to earn less than their counterparts in Mukono. It was also revealed that government has contributed to these differences in teacher remuneration by paying science teachers relatively higher than arts teachers. Key informants also stated that many people believe that science subjects are better taught in the central region due to better infrastructure and facilities, and as such, some parents from the Eastern region who can afford, prefer to take their children to study in the central thus leading to differences in performances between Eastern and central Uganda. Individual school administration policies and management of the school, was also related to educational inequality as stated by a key informant: If the school is not properly managed, it leads to some form of educational inequalities and more specifically if the founders of the school or directors lack knowledge on proper management of an educational institution.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study aimed at comparing inequality in schools in the central and Eastern regions of Uganda which were represented by Mukono and Iganga respectively. Findings revealed that schools in Eastern Uganda have more students as compared to those in the central region. This attributed this to inadequate allocation schools in the Eastern region that made students to have no option but ought to fix themselves in the few schools. This factor generated inconvenience circumstances for those accessing schools over distance as compared to the central region with better infrastructure. This further means that few schools in the Eastern region have to accommodate larger population of students and the bigger the class size, the bigger the teacher-student ratio which limits participation of students, especially the academically weak ones. As the study revealed that schools that are nearer to the central government structures such as those in the central region are highly supported by the government, and this opportunity gives them a chance to identify bottlenecks in school management and performance, thus prompting practical and immediate actions than those schools that are far and hardly monitored thus improving the quality of education in those schools nearer to the central government.

Family economic status as a factor associated with education inequality featured in both regions. Generally, Uganda is a low income country and the standard of living of most families is still low. In the central region, the standard of living is high and this has been made worse by increasing urbanization, high population growth, and increased food insecurity. In the Eastern region, the situation is no different for urban based families, and for rural based families, unstable incomes from agriculture and the prolonged rebel war that disrupted family life in that part of the country for many years left many families in poverty. Moreover, the type of families in Eastern region is still dominated by the extended family structure which is much bigger compared to those in the central which are dominated by a nuclear family. The government policy of promoting science based subjects has also

favored urban based schools especially those in the central region thus increasing inequality in upcountry areas which may not have certain privileges.

Even those schools in the Eastern region that attempt to offer science subjects, still fall short of the required standards by the regulating bodies both local and international. Regarding gender based educational inequality, the study found out that the boy-child is given more priority when it comes to education opportunities and although this was more prevalent in the north, it is believed that as the central region is composed of residents from different parts of Uganda some families living in the central region who still cherish their cultural norms, such as investing in the boy-child to carry on the family name and legacy and care for their parents when they age. Some parents also state that it may not be productive to educate a girl who will grow up and get married and leave the home. This therefore justifies the reason for some form of gender-based educational inequality in the central region, contributed to increased school drop-out rates, as well as early marriage for the girl-child.

Moreover, Parents are also known in some cases to decide for their children the subject combinations to be studied especially at advanced level (A Level), a practice that has widened educational inequalities related to gender, and has also made children to opt for subject combinations especially sciences that are not their choices, leading to biases and thus poor educational performance. Although the government has put in place a system known as the quota system whereby students who perform very well from every district in the country, and currently Uganda has more than 101 districts, is supposed to receive free university education, students from the central region-based schools and more so boys still dominate admission to public universities because of better performance in science subjects which are highly promoted by the government. This gives boys an advantage over girls thus creating some form of gender-based inequality.

In both central and Eastern region, there is some form of child labor, however, it is more prevalent in the Eastern region and this could be due to the fact that many children lost their parents have entered into sugarcane production and the HIV pandemic living many children as orphans who have to fend for themselves and pay for their education. Teachers from the central region are believed to be more equipped to teach students and more up to date with information as a result of a better environment where they easily access information through different sources such as the internet, a privilege which may not apply to teachers in the Eastern region but also better remunerated which motivates them to work harder leading to better student performance. This factor is not only common in secondary schools, but even in tertiary institutions including universities especially public universities where sit down strikes due to poor payment are a common occurrence.

Well motivated staff tend to concentrate on their work as compared to poorly motivated ones who may even go out during school hours to do part-time jobs so as to 'make ends meet'. On-sport checking in many governments owned schools has caught teachers unaware doing other activities such as farming and other income generating activities during school hours, and such teachers have been expelled from teaching. Moreover, in the short run, educational inequality in the Eastern region is likely to continue for some time as the situation of recent has been worsen by the influx of refugees fleeing the war in South Sudan. Over one million refugees have entered the country since the beginning of this year 2017 and the number keeps on growing as time goes by.

Government of Uganda sector wide policies greatly support total inclusion of non-nationals especially the refugees to share the country's education and health care, thus increasing the crave for educational resources. This remains a big threat to desired students' academic performance. It has been reported that refugees are attending same schools with students from the host country and the teachers in these schools are reported to be overwhelmed by the numbers of students. This may not a direct case for schools in Eastern Uganda though such schools would be affected by National Education resource allocation as government takes consideration for the increased population in the refugees' affected areas. Educational inequalities have a negative impact on people's quality of life after school which also affects productivity and development of the country as majority of these people are in the productive age group and expected to contribute to the economy of the country.

In conclusion, the study found both the central and Eastern regions of Uganda to have a number of similar factors that bring about educational inequality in schools, although most of them are more prominent in the Eastern region. While previous studies consistently indicated a wider discrepancy in school performance, this study revealed that a number of factors leading to educational inequality in both regions are similar as a result of urbanization which is widely spreading in many parts of the country although they are more prevalent in the Eastern region. The factors in the Eastern region could be attributed to the prolonged rebel war which affected that part of the country for a long time and destroyed the infrastructure. However, efforts are being made to improve the quality of education in other parts of the country and this is seen in a way that both government and privately owned universities have been opened in other parts of the country and the infrastructure such as roads

and communication networks are being worked on. Meanwhile, if the political situation in the neighboring countries such as South Sudan improve, and some of the government weak policies are addressed, it is hoped that with time, educational inequality across Uganda and more so in the Eastern region will cease to be, leading to higher school performance and improved quality of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government of Uganda together with other Education Agencies should fast track and implements the policy of establishing and resourcing secondary schools in each of the Parishes. This will effectively alleviate the challenge of distance that have negatively affected students' attendance specifically in Eastern Region.

The parents stereotype belief of considering boys' children as first priority in supporting school education should be discouraging. Community policing and enforcement of laws that encourage regular attendance to both boys and girls need to be considered. This can be done by putting in place strong monitoring mechanism for the parents to ensure adherence.

There is need to strengthen imitative to improved students' health not only those that are related to HIV and AIDS. Regular school programs that are related to practice of good health need to be revamped. School health assembly need to be routine endeavors and the subject curriculum should integrate personal health and hygiene to accommodate students' health needs.

The teacher motivation strategies need to be upheld. Government should review and appreciate the role of Parents' Teachers' Association and support the structure as means to provision of additional financial support to teachers inform incentives and allowances. This would be done to encourage teachers to undertake extra load in supporting the students in their academic pursuits.

There is need to review funding modalities in terms of grants from Government and Education partners to cater for additional number of students arising from related factors like influx of refugees. The capitation grants for such schools with increased number of students need to be revised up wards from time to time

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