6

UGANDA

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Introduction

Government's efforts to increase access

With the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in 1997, primary school enrolment in Uganda increased from 2.9 million (m) in 1996 to 7.3m in 2003. About 50 per cent of the lowest economic quartile was enrolled in 1992, while by 1999, 83.7 per cent of children of school-going age were enrolled. It is asserted that the majority of the 23 per cent of the Ugandan population benefiting from primary education are from the lowest income quartile. The 2001 Uganda Demographic Household Survey (UDHS) indicated that 24 per cent of children were out of school because of monetary cost. Public intervention was thus said to raise access and equity. In addition, the UPE policy of enrolling all children of school-going age had the effect of increasing girls' enrolment to about 50 per cent of total enrolment, thus significantly reducing the gender-parity gap.[1] However, the contribution of private sector education provisions in increasing access, although acknowledged, is not fully known.

Completion rates in the primary sub-sector are still very low in Uganda – averaging 22 per cent. An enormous amount of public funding is required if the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of children completing a full course of primary education is to be attained. It is also estimated that government requires building an average of 100,000 classrooms per year in order to attain the desired teacher-classroom ratio of 1:1. Projections show that government is only able to build about 6,000–8,000 classrooms per year over the next two decades.[2]

The above scenario suggests that the current and potential role of private sector in meeting the education-provision gap is obvious. At the advent of UPE, government funded a large number of private schools in peri-urban and rural areas for about four years – providing UPE funds and meeting teachers' remuneration. However, as classroom construction continued in government/government-aided schools using the School Facilities Grants (SFGs), most private schools lost this funding. Consequently, the condition earlier imposed by government of charging not more than 10,000[3] Uganda shillings (USh) per school term was broken with the majority now charging at least USh25,000.[4]

The high dropout rate recorded in primary schools poses a threat to achieving the MDG on education in Uganda. It was observed, for example, that out of the 2.1m pupils enrolled in primary 1 (P1, grade or class 1) in 1997, roughly 33 per cent reached primary 6 by 2002 and 22 per cent reached primary 7 in 2003. The high school dropout rates are attributed to lack of provision of midday meals and parents being poor and unable to afford basic requirements like pens, pencils, books and uniforms.[5] Paradoxically, some of the children who drop out of UPE schools enrol in low-cost private schools and pay tuition fees, albeit in material form sometimes, such as a number of kilos of maize seeds and/or beans.

Uganda's Education Management Information System (EMIS) data for 2006 shows that there are many districts where the net enrolment ratio (NER) is above 100 per cent. There are several suggested reasons for this. One is that the advent of UPE saw many over-age and under-age children enrolled in UPE, who reported their ages to be in the school-going age range of 6–12 years, hence the apparent excessive NER. Another is that the nearly absent provision of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services, especially in rural communities, saw a large cross-section of under-age children enrolled in primary schools.[6] A third possible reason is that on top of the refugee community who send their children to Ugandan schools, there was also an influx of children living in districts bordering Uganda who were attracted across the border by the offer of free education. Other explanations point to cases of deliberate inflation of enrolment figures by head teachers of government schools, so as to attract bigger school capitation grants, given that the allocation of capitation grants is calculated on the basis of school enrolment. Double-counts as a result of transfer-ins and transfer-outs and inter-district movements/displacements – some of them fuelled by insecurity – could also have contributed to this phenomenon. Notwithstanding these different hypotheses, however, the phenomenon of the NER being greater than 100 per cent inevitably casts doubt on the quality and accuracy of EMIS data. The quality, quantity and accuracy of data on private education provisions, for example, may be found wanting.

A policy for disadvantaged children is in place and provides for the provision of basic education for children who are experiencing barriers to education to learning, either outside or within the formal system. The policy is meant to ensure that provisions are in place for multi-grade teaching as a way of reaching isolated communities and providing them with basic education. This includes the provision of incentives for teachers in hard-to-reach areas, the promotion of double-shift teaching as a means to overcoming large teacher-pupil ratios, and measures to enrol orphans and address the learning needs of teachers and children affected by HIV/AIDS. With the exception of the Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth (PIASCY) – a programme focusing on HIV/AIDS in schools, in which all schools have school assemblies, 'talking compounds' etc. focusing on HIV/AIDS – *'implementation of the policy for disadvantaged children does not seem to have started'*. The little known role of private schools in increasing access among disadvantaged children,

especially in remote, hard-to-reach communities, could provide policy directions. Recognising and supporting these efforts may pay dividends.[7]

While EMIS had shown that over 200,000 children were attending non-formal education in programmes such as Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE), Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) and Basic Education in Urban Poor Areas (BEUPA), the costed policy framework captured in the Medium-Term Budget Framework (MTBF) of 2003/04 only recognised 67,500 children. There were complications in the manner in which all these children would benefit from UPE capitation grants at district and school levels. Although the MTBF provided for certain aspects of the major non-formal education provisions, the broader costings for disadvantaged children, for example children in hard-to-reach areas, conflict areas of Northern Uganda and internally-displaced people (IDP), as defined in the Strategy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children, were not incorporated into the MTBF.[8]

Furthermore, the education sector review noted that the proposed allocation for School Facilities Grant budget allocation to districts did not cater for internally-displaced pupils, out-of-school children and pupils studying in 'temporary' structures, amongst others. The education planning and review documents, such as the *Ninth Education Review: Aide Memoire* (Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2003) made no mention of private education provisions – suggesting that the review could have entirely focused on public and government-aided education provisions.[9]

In 1999–2002, total government spending on the primary education sub-sector was estimated to be about 68 per cent of overall national expenditure on education.[10] The Indicative Medium-Term Expenditure Framework for the financial years 2003/04–2006/07 placed total expenditure on the education sub-sector (including donor and projects) at USh723.87 billion in financial year 2006/07, with primary education teachers' wages projected at USh258.12 billion (35 per cent of the education total, October 2003) and primary education conditional grants and district development grants estimated at USh47.90 billion and USh65.2 billion respectively.[11] Uganda's Education Bill (2002) outlines the financial responsibility of government in grant-aided education institutions as: ensuring that trained teachers are deployed; paying salaries and allowances to teachers; paying salaries and wages to established non-teaching staff; and paying all statutory grants in the form of aid, including annual recurrent and capitation grants, salaries and wages, capitation and instructional materials. Expenditures by private education providers are not reflected in most government records and yet could be a potentially useful guide in resource allocations and re-prioritisation. Additionally, allocation of public funds to private education providers with regards to their current and potential roles, especially in improving access for disadvantaged children, could be invaluable in the pursuit of the MDG on education.

Education in Uganda at a glance

Education Profile of Uganda
(all figures extrapolated for the year 2007)[12]

- Population of Uganda: 28 million
- School-age population (aged 6–12): 6,384,675
- Gross enrolment rate: 96 per cent
- Total number of primary school pupils: 6,149,067
- Number of primary school pupils in unsubsidised (non-government) schools: 514,454
- Percentage of pupils in unsubsidised schools: 8.4 per cent
- Between 2000 and 2001, government ownership of primary schools increased from 69.7 per cent to 74.8 per cent owing to the initiative to improve equity, whereby government takes over management of community schools
- Over the same period, the private sector nearly doubled its share of provision of primary-level education services from 10.6 per cent to 20.3 per cent[13]
- Projected number of pupils in partly government-aided schools: 0[14]
- Total number of pupils in government-aided schools: 5,634,614
- Total number of teachers on government payroll: 114,530 (of which only 274 are untrained)
- Average teacher remuneration per annum excluding premium in Local Currency Units (LCU): 1,884,277
- Total teacher remuneration excluding premium (millions of LCU): 215,807 million
- Total teacher remuneration including premium (millions of LCU): 218,272 million
- Spending on inputs other than teachers (millions of LCU): 103,890 million
- Total expenditure on inputs other than teachers as a percentage of total recurrent spending: 32.2 per cent
- Projected total off-budget recurrent spending on primary education (millions of LCU): 459, 640 million[15]

Background to continued 'mushrooming' of private schools

The principal components of the UPE policy were the elimination of tuition fees and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) fees for the vast majority of pupils. This resulted in an unexpectedly massive increase in enrolments (see figure below). Since that landmark declaration, enrolments in primary education have jumped from 2.7 million in 1996 to approximately 7.2 million in 2002, moving Uganda much closer to achieving UPE.

However, the sudden and dramatic expansion of enrolments has put tremendous strain on the entire education system in Uganda, most specifically on the quality of education. This is partly reflected in the deterioration in academic performance of pupils. The deterioration in the quality of education has been blamed on overcrowding in government-aided primary schools and delays in paying teachers.

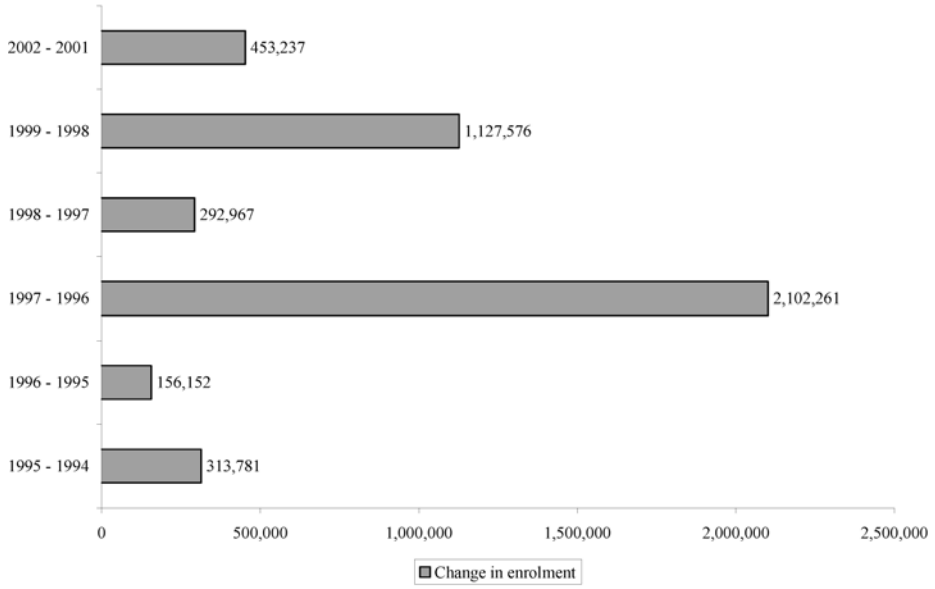

Figure 6.1 Change in national enrolment figures, 1994–2002
Source: UNESCO (2000) EFA Assessment 2000 Country Report for Uganda

The increase in enrolment in government primary schools with no commensurate increase in the number of teachers (actually made worse by a ban on teacher recruitment from 2003–2006) led to teacher-pupil ratios getting significantly worse. This saw teachers unable to effectively teach, or to assess or monitor the academic performance of pupils. Interviews with parents and education officers further highlighted the effects of decreasing education quality in government schools on the mushrooming of privately-owned schools. A case in point is in Gulu Municipality, where at least three privately-owned primary schools (Mother Angioletta, Bright Valley and Labour-Line Primary School) have been registered and about eight others licensed to operate since the start of UPE.

Definitions of different forms of schools in Uganda

In Uganda, a school's status of operation is determined by who runs it. This could be different from the founding body (government, religious, parents, entrepreneurs or others) and the funding source. In essence, this relates to the authority that has the biggest stake in the school management. There are several forms of non-government schools in Uganda, but the Uganda Education Bill (2002) categorises education institutions into three categories:

- Public education institutions/government-founded institutions

- Government grant-aided education institutions (also referred to as community schools)
- Private institutions, which include both local and international

While the Bill outlines the three broad education provisions, the different categories of private school are not articulated.[16] As a result, some community schools are categorised as private schools. The Uganda Education Bill (2002) defines a private school as one that 'is not founded by government and receiving no statutory grants from government'. The growth of private schools has its roots in the policy on democratisation of education (Republic of Uganda, 1992) and the liberalisation and privatisation policy implemented as part of the World Bank and IMF Structural Adjustment Policies from 1986. Liberalisation of the economy meant that private investors could provide services like health, education and transport to citizens. In the education sector, it led to the proliferation of privately-owned schools, especially in urban and peri-urban areas.

In some cases, the lack of nearby government schools led to the growth of low-cost private schools. This phenomenon was fed by the fact that the supply of newly-trained teachers was too great to be absorbed by government schools. The government ban on recruitment of teachers that lasted nearly three years from 2003 and only lifted in 2006, demonstrates the low-absorption capacity. These teachers tend to start up low-cost schools in an effort to create employment. By 2006, there were 150,120 schoolteachers in all primary schools and most of them (64 per cent) were grade 3[17] trained with a 59:41 ratio of male to female teachers.[18]

In an interview, one respondent described the formation of private schools thus:

> 'Private schools' proprietors come together to invest in education. In terms of management, ownership is private; when two or three people are together, they are called a Board of Directors (BOD), mobilise resources and invest in a school. The BOD then nominates a School Management Committee and a Parent Teacher Association (PTA).'[19]

Private schools are started by individuals or institutions to provide education services, but with an objective to make a profit; they do not receive any public funding.[20]

The Education Bill defines government-founded schools as 'public schools or schools founded by government.' A government grant-aided school is one that is not founded by government, but receives statutory grants in form of aid from government and is jointly managed by the foundation body and government. The grants received include annual recurrent and capitation grants from government, salaries and wages, and instructional materials to cover operational costs. Such schools do not depend entirely on government grants, but receive some public funding. Universal Primary Education is described in the Bill as a programme with free education, where obstacles to accessing primary education have been removed. UPE is the provision of primary education to all children of school-going age.

Apart from the definitions provided by the Education Bill (2002), *community schools* in Uganda are generally started by rural communities as 'self-help initiatives' in areas where the nearest school is more than two kilometres away. They usually start under temporary structures (reeds, mud and wattle or sometimes just poles with a tin roof), or sheltered in existing community structures such as churches, and sometimes simply located in a compound with classes held under trees. Up to a point when government expresses interest to take over ownership and management, these schools receive limited subsidies and funding from government. Such funding might include, for example, roofing an incomplete classroom block constructed by community members, posting teachers to the school and providing a few teaching resources. Ownership of these schools is usually transferred to government at the earliest opportunity. Although community schools do not have a profit-making objective, they are sometimes categorised as private education institutions.[21]

Religious affiliated private schools

These are owned and run by religious bodies that in Uganda include the Catholic Church, Church of Uganda, Seventh Day Adventists and Muslims or 'developed from religious missions'.[22] They may be supported externally by parent bodies with the same religious affiliation. Usually they also require the parents to contribute a small fee towards the running of the school. However, owing to the history of education having an inclination to religion, government now has a significant control over a huge majority of religious schools through recruitment and remuneration of teachers, providing curriculum and subsidising teaching and learning resources, offering supervision services, accrediting and providing registration. The role of religious bodies remains in governance; at least a quarter of the school's Board of Governors are representatives of the religious body.

Low-cost private schools

A low-cost private school is a non-government school owned by an individual or individuals with relatively affordable fees in relation to its locality. The fee is seen as affordable (ranging from 15,000 local currency units [LCU; approximately £5] to 28,000 LCU [approximately £9] per school term).[23] Low-cost private schools are usually in peri-urban areas and are usually within 1–2km of a government school.

High-cost private schools

Like the low-cost private schools, high-cost private schools are owned by an individual or individuals and include international schools. They usually include boarding sections and are associated with high fees and assured high-quality services. Clientele for high-cost private schools are usually upper- and middle-class citizens. Often due to high motivation of teachers and good teaching and learning resources, these schools have a 'good academic reputation'. These private schools are often located in urban areas, particularly in the central region of Uganda.

The government's responsibilities

The responsibility of government in private education institutions, as enshrined in the Education Bill (2002), is to ensure that private institutions conform to government rules and regulations governing the provision of education services in the country. The Bill also lays out procedures for government aiding education institutions: '...any education institution to qualify for grant-aiding shall have fulfilled all the regulations for licensing and registration'. Government, at its discretion, determines which applications received from founder bodies are considered for grant-aid. Responsibility of government in state and grant-aided education institutions includes: ensuring that trained teachers are deployed; paying salaries and allowances to teachers; paying salaries and wages to established non-teaching staff; paying all statutory grants; appointing heads of these institutions in consultation with the foundation bodies; providing educational materials and other capital development inputs; and providing national pupil admission guidelines. The Education Bill states, 'no person shall teach in any public or private school of any description unless (s)he is registered as a teacher or licensed to teach under this Bill.' Only those persons who successfully complete a teacher-training course are entitled, on application to the Director of Education, to be registered as teachers.

In the event that a government-aided school wishes to revert to private institution status, the government regulations governing school charges and admissions will apply for a period not exceeding four years to allow for pupils/students admitted to it to complete their cycle or find alternative institutions. Government recovers 70 per cent of the value of public funding towards the development of physical facilities from the foundation body (recovered in phases over a maximum period of ten years) from the institution that wishes to revert to private status.

Methodology

In investigating the impact of the low-cost private sector education on achieving Universal Primary Education in Uganda, this study was limited to 'private-sector, low-fee paying schools owned by an individual or individuals or other form of commercial enterprise.' Schools founded by communities and religious bodies, and international and high-fee private schools were excluded.

Research processes

The study was composed of four main processes for data gathering:

- A review of available surveys and EMIS data;
- A review of secondary data and prior studies carried out on private education in Uganda and developing countries with similar characteristics to Uganda;

- Key informant interviews, which included education administrators, District Inspectors of Schools (DIS), District Education Officers from the Lira and Mityana districts and a proprietor of a private school; and
- A detailed study of two selected schools.

With guidance from the Lira District Inspector of Schools, two schools, a government-aided and a low-cost private school, were selected in the same parish in Lira district in Northern Uganda.[24] The district is neither very rural nor very urban; it has characteristics of a typical district having a blend of urban, peri-urban and rural areas. The selected schools and the school communities had attributes that are common to peri-urban environments such as payment of school fees by cash, topped up with payments in kind. This is typical of peri-urban communities, where small business thrives alongside subsistence farming, often of very small pieces of land.

Case studies were developed of the two schools, based on interviews with school proprietors, head teachers, pupils, parents and opinion leaders from each community. Schoolteachers helped in selecting the children and parents to be interviewed. A total of four children and four parents were deliberately selected from middle-income and poor households to be interviewed. The pupils were selected from the middle and upper classes[25] (11–12 years old) for credible responses.

Limitations

Field visits were limited due to budget constraints. Private schools have very weak documentation and record-keeping processes. Frequent power interruptions also constrained receipt of data from education offices and affected analysis and report writing.

Findings

Education statistics

In 1999, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) embarked on developing an Education Management Information System (EMIS) to improve timeliness, accuracy, reliability and availability of information to various users. While the design showed that the district would be the focal point of the system, **decentralisation of data processing in the EMIS had not yet taken off at the time of writing despite numerous efforts ... because of infrastructural constraints. However, a lot has been achieved in terms of data gathering;**[26] the information in the database enables trend-analysis by time or by location, producing summarised statistical details at the national and district levels, or full details at sub-county, parish or school levels collected annually with the following range of information:

- Key education ratios: teacher: pupil; classroom: pupil; and textbook: pupil
- Gross and net enrolment and intake rates

- Repeaters, dropouts, the disabled and orphans
- Teachers' professional and academic qualifications
- School infrastructure, school finances etc.[27]

The advent of EMIS at district and national level has seen an improvement in primary school data capture. Data collection is carried out at district level and consolidated at national level. Statistical abstracts and reports generated by EMIS contain detailed statistics on profiles of education indices, usually presented in three broad categories: government schools, private education provisions and community schools. It is worthy of mention, however, that disaggregation of private education provisions in these reports is seldom made. In addition, comparison of data at national, district and school level on private schools sometimes shows significant differences.

This begs several questions: are all private schools aware of the requirement to provide data to the respective district education offices? Are the data requirements and the attendant data instruments accessible and well articulated to private education managers? Do private schools co-operate adequately in provision of required data? Could it be that a significant proportion of the information collected on private schools is inadequate or unreliable for analysis and subsequent publishing?

It is evident that data capture of non-government education provisions is very thinly captured. Data on many parameters pertaining to several private education provisions is not reflected in the overall national education statistics. In addition, government records only capture data of officially-registered private schools. This data is not presented in a way that shows the status of different types of private schooling. Furthermore, ambiguity in descriptions of different categories of private education provisions has resulted in some community schools being classified as private while others are categorised as public schools.

Tables 6.1 and 6.2, below, show some of the data that is captured at MoES and by district in the EMIS.

It is evident from the tables that efforts are made to collect data on private education provision. However, as remarked by one of the education officials in the district,

Table 6.1 Primary school enrolment patterns in Lira district[28]

	Lower		*Middle*		*Upper*		*Total*	
	Boys	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*
Government enrolment	39,480	36,721	21,432	18,058	14,039	10,140	75,236	65,083
	52%	48%	54%	46%	58%	42%	54%	46%
Private enrolment	Data in absolute terms is missing							
	58%	42%	67%	33%	65%	35%	63%	37%

'...sometimes due to late submission of data, unreliable, incomplete or missing data, estimates are used when it comes to reporting data on private schools.' The fact that relative values are given in the table, while the absolute values are missing, suggests that estimates are being used. It is also widely acknowledged that data on private education provision captured in government information systems is either absent, partial or incorrect.

Flaws in data collection, capture and reporting

There are caveats and limitations to primary and secondary data presented in the EMIS. For example, the data presented does not reflect the total schools' population, but is rather from schools where responses were received. The table below shows response rates by sub-sector.[29]

Worth noting is the fact that there was an increase in the number of private primary schools between the year 2005 and 2006 from 11.1 per cent of the total number of primary schools to 13.3 per cent, while the percentage of government primary schools dropped from 83.3 per cent to 80.9 per cent in the same period.

Of the total number of primary schools that responded shown in Table 6.2 above (statistics not disaggregated by ownership of school), 6.4 per cent are situated in urban areas, 11.9 per cent in peri-urban areas and 78.5 per cent are located in rural areas. The location of 3.3 per cent of the schools was not stated. In addition, 82.7 per cent of the total 14,385 were registered, 4.7 per cent licensed (whereby the school is not fully officially registered, but has a licence to operate), 7.9 per cent were not registered, while the registration status of 674 primary schools (4.7 per cent) was not known.[31]

One caveat of using the tables in the abstract is that they present subsets of schools; combining these subsets will not necessarily give the totals shown in the summary table due to incidence of unknown values. For example, combining the tables showing enrolment in government-, private- and community-owned schools does not give the total enrolment. This is because some schools did not provide information about their ownership, hence are not included in the summary table.[32]

Furthermore, the current EMIS in Uganda has limitations with regard to data collection at three levels, namely, at schools, at district level and at MoES headquarters.

Table 6.2 Response rates by sub-sector

	No. of schools in database	*No. that responded*	*Response rate*	*Enrolment in 2006*
Government	11,883	11,643	98%	6,668,931
Private	4,806	1,877	39%	476,215
Community	1,118	865[30]	77%	211,924
Total	17,807	14,385	81%	7,362,938

'Enrolment figures tend to be over-estimated, leading to a NER greater than 100 per cent. Some schools and districts declare higher enrolment to attract higher UPE capitation since the disbursements to schools are determined by the number of pupils reported. This criterion is ranked high on the list of factors for inflated enrolment figures among some schools.'[33] Private schools have also been accused of irregular reporting and submitting incomplete and flawed data.[34]

Irregularities in reporting on private education provision

The phenomenon described above is reflected in different EMIS cross-tabulation tables where responses – at best – show 'all primary schools inclusive of private and community ownership'.

In Table 6.3, below, private providers and community schools are classified under one category. The absence of a detailed breakdown of the contributions by the different non-government educations suggests several hypotheses: that probably the contribution of individual categories is too small, hence the need to 'collapse' the different categories into one category during data presentation; or that inadequate

Table 6.3 Trends in key education indicators

	Year 2000		*Year 2001*		*Overall comments*	
Key education indicators	*All schools*	*Only gov't schools*	*All schools*	*Only gov't schools*	*All schools*	*Only gov't schools*
Pupils	6,559,013	5,351,099	6,900,916	5,917,216	5% growth	11% growth
Teachers	110,366	82,148	127,038	101,818	15% growth	24% growth
Classrooms	68,523	50,370	77,200	60,199	13% growth	19.5% growth
Pupil-teacher ratio	59	65	54	58	8.5% improvement	Up by 7 pts
Pupil-classroom ratio	96	106	89	98	7.2% improvement	Up by 8 pts
Pupil-textbook ratio – lower primary	6	5	5	5	16% improvement	No change
Pupil-textbook ratio – upper primary	3	3	3	3	No change	No change
Net enrolment in P7	10%	8%	10%	9.8%	No change	1.8% improvement

Source: MoES (2002b) and MoES (2001) Education Sector Fact File

information is collected/received from non-government providers and hence aggregate estimates are used.

However, further analysis of the table negates the first hypothesis; both the absolute contributions in discrete years and the contributions in the relative changes between the two time series strongly indicate a significant contribution of non-government education providers. A proportion of 18 per cent and 26 per cent in enrolment and teacher numbers respectively contributed by non-government education providers in 2000 is by no means small, although the contributions drop to 14 per cent and 20 per cent respectively in the following year. It is also evident that the contribution of non-government providers towards pupil-classroom ratios is much lower as reflected in the low ratios, and further in the relative growth of 13 per cent overall compared to 19.5 per cent for 'only government' schools between the two years.

The District Inspector of Schools of Lira District suggested the reason for the under-reporting of private provision in the district included the under-resourcing of the department responsible for data collection: 'Sometimes data is collected from private schools, but because of inadequate manpower, it is not entered in the EMIS... Secondly, data is not collected as regularly as it should be on a termly [three-month] basis due to limited personnel, the distance between schools and logistical limitations, especially transport to cover all the schools in the district...' This suggests that education officials prioritise which sites to visit so as to use the meagre resources available to them to collect data from public schools.

Omission of private sector contributions in many national records and reports on primary school education is partly explained by unavailability of data on private schools. It is *alleged* that this data is 'not readily available and always inadequate for detailed analysis.' As one of the District Education Officials in Lira District remarked, 'many of the private school owners *disappear* from their schools every time the District Education Department visits to collect data...' It is widely believed by education officials that private school owners relate the data collection exercise to taxation and hence do everything possible to avoid providing the required information. Meanwhile, owners and managers of private schools argue that they submit data on their schools to the district as stipulated, but that it is rarely or incorrectly captured in the district databases, as revealed in the quote below:

> 'We provide monthly returns to the District Education Office, and this information includes the number of pupils, the number of teachers, records on utilities like desks, financial accountability... The district keeps these records although their reports do not always show correct information about us.'
> *Source:* Deputy headmistress of Canon Lawrence Demonstration Primary School (a government school)

Another hypothesis to explain the under-reporting of private schools is the long and bureaucratic registration process of private schools. The long list of minimum requirements, as was noted by the director of one of the private schools that

participated in this study, is not a major challenge: 'the uphill task has to do with the actual registration process', which is described as 'a painfully slow bureaucratic process.' There are no exceptions for low-cost private schools in the registration process; all private schools are required to meet the government standard.[35] In addition, the compulsory requirement for private schools to operate as 'provisional schools for a minimum of two years,' before rigorous assessment for registration partly explains the omissions in data collection, as priority may be given to registered private education providers. These schools are usually far fewer in number and of the high-cost variety. The challenges experienced by private schools during the registration process, form a major source of explanation for the relatively few registered private schools in Uganda compared to the total numbers in existence.

Contradictions in statistical reporting on private education

Tables 6.4 and 6.5 demonstrate the disparities in statistics between the MoES and district EMIS data. While it would be expected that the MoES data be compiled from the individual district databases, it is evident that this is not the case in the two data sets (note disparities in discrete and aggregate values). This throws the accuracy and completeness of the data into doubt. It is certain that there are more private education providers in existence than are represented here in the data.

Table 6.4 Number of primary schools by ownership and by district – as compiled by MoES

District	*Government*	*Community*	*Private*
Adjumani	68	14	2
Apac	284	2	
Arua	311	36	
Gulu	232		5
Kaberamaido	85	3	0
Katakwi	169	4	
Kitgum	169	0	6
Kotido	104	0	0
Kumi	220	3	4
Lira	332		10
Moroto	45	8	
Moyo	74		3
Nakapiripirit	40	15	0
Nebbi	220	8	1
Pader	182	35	2
Pallisa	186		
Soroti	151	19	1
Yumbe	113	5	0
Total	2,985	152	34

Table 6.5 Number of primary schools by ownership and by district – as compiled by districts

District	*Government*	*Community*	*Private*	*Total*
Adjumani	57	23	4	84
Apac	267	10	2	279
Arua	300	31	26	357
Gulu	219	3	7	229
Kaberamaido	0	0	0	0
Katakwi	0	0	0	0
Kitgum	130	25	6	161
Kotido	0	0	0	0
Kumi	198	22	3	223
Lira	314	9	8	331
Moroto	39	6	0	45
Moyo	61	11	4	76
Nakapiripit	0	0	0	0
Nebbi	0	0	0	0
Pader	179	26	5	210
Pallisa	183	6	11	200
Soroti	154	22	5	181
Yumbe	80	21	9	110
Total	2,181	215	90	2,486

The public/private choice

The choice of public or private school is largely made at the family level. The Uganda DHS EdData Survey (UDES) revealed, for instance, that in rural areas fathers are more likely than in urban areas to make the decision on whether a child should attend school at all – and therefore about what sort of school he/she will attend. In Northern Uganda, a region that has been hit by civil war for the last two decades, fathers are more likely than in other regions to make the final decisions. The table below illustrates decision-making about school attendance.

Table 6.6 Who decides about school attendance[36]

Percentage distribution of parents/guardians by which household member decides whether children attend school, according to background characteristics.

Background characteristic	Household member making final decision									Total	Number of parents/ guardians
	Mother	Father	Both parents	Guardians	Child	Parent/ guardian with child	Someone else	Decision not made	Don't know/ missing		
Residence											
Urban	24.7	26.5	29.4	12.4	0.3	4.8	0.1	0.7	1.1	100	481
Rural	16.5	39.9	26	10.9	0.2	4.7	0.2	1	0.5	100	3,765
Region											
Central	23.3	29	25.1	11.9	0.1	8.3	0.2	1.5	0.5	100	1,409
Eastern	10	44	28.5	12.9	0.2	3	0.3	0.4	0.7	100	1,164
Northern	15.6	55.9	18.9	6.7	0.2	1.7	0.3	0	0.6	100	646
Western	19.1	33.9	30.7	10.4	0.2	3.6	0.1	1.6	0.4	100	1,026
Total	17.5	38.4	26.4	11	0.2	4.7	0.2	1	0.6	100	4,246

Possible reasons for choice of school

There are a host of factors that parents, guardians and/or children consider in making a decision on which type of school the child should attend. Some of these factors are directly related to school provisions, while others pertain largely to the socio-economic conditions of the family.

The reason parents choose to send their children to private schools can be summed up as dissatisfaction with UPE. UPE has been criticised for the following reasons:

> 'Children made to study for free, but UPE is spoilt by the high number of children, limited classrooms, and poor pupil-teacher relationships.'

> 'Parents have left everything to government; parents no longer mind about children's performance, as promotion to the next class is "automatic," because they don't pay tuition fees.'

The policy of automatic promotion has been highly criticised because parents feel children are promoted to the next class even when they are not ready; at the end of the seven-year primary school cycle, some children have not mastered basic literacy and numeracy, because of poor-quality education.

> 'UPE has generally been more of a failure than a success – most pupils who study in UPE schools from P1 to P7 usually fail the primary level examination (PLE).'

> 'UPE policies are spoiling children, for example caning children was abolished; children must be punished for any wrong-doing to make them learn from their mistakes – inappropriate outside practices [children's rights] are spoiling our children – both in school performance and discipline! Discipline in schools is often associated with good performance and therefore a brighter future for the children by parents ... this cannot be said of UPE schools.'
> *Source:* Interview with private schoolteacher

Table 6.7 Explicit and implicit costs incurred in public and private schools

Costs incurred	
Private school	*Government school*
School fees	PTA fees
Water bill	Development fund (about 7,000 shillings per school term)
Food; beans and maize meal	
Medical fee	Brooms
Fee for latrine maintenance	Costs for porridge for lunch (usually 2-5kg maize seeds)
Development fee	
School uniform (in some schools this is optional)	School uniform

One could argue that UPE in Uganda is not free, as it has some explicit and implicit costs. Such costs, varying from one situation to another, may include uniform costs, scholastic materials, building and development fees, food and other non-financial school requirements such as brooms and firewood. Putting this into context, on average, a typical rural household in Uganda in 2000 spent USh26,870 (£9) on public schooling or USh128,160 (£42) on private schooling on various school costs during the year. The mean average expenditures on schooling among pupils attending public schools was about one-fifth the mean average for pupils attending non-public schools. In the past, private education was considered expensive and only served the middle class in urban areas, not the poor. However, with the growth of low-cost private schools, this perception is slowly changing. With the low cost of hiring teachers in rural private schools, these schools allow savings to be passed on to parents through low fees. Why then do parents still pay for the relatively expensive private schools? A probable reason could be inferred from the response of one 68-year-old, Joyce Auma, of Lira on why she continues to send her grandchild to a low-cost private school:

> 'If there is poor quality meat sold at USh1,000 a kilo and in the neighbouring market stall there is better meat sold at USh3,000 a kilo, I would rather take the latter even if I will just have it for once and take ages without having meat again!'

Academic performance and level of pupil engagement

While government strives to provide equal access to quality education through the UPE programme, a dominant public view in Uganda is that government primary schools offer varying standards of education judged by their performance on the national public primary leaving examination (PLE). One possible reason for this variety is the policy of automatic promotion from one class to another. It is widely acknowledged that many children do not attend classes regularly, do not concentrate in class and only come to sit the end-of-term or end-of-year exams, as this is all that is required for transition to the next class. However, after completion of the seven years primary school cycle, there are substantial numbers of pupils who fail the PLE, which is the prerequisite for entrance into secondary school.

A review of statistical information on primary education in Mityana district reveals that the average academic performance of private schools is better than that of government schools – especially in mathematics. Some of the explanations provided included the fact that in private schools there is no automatic promotion, which *ensures* quality; and that remedial classes are offered, especially to slow learners, to help pupils learn faster and catch up with others. It was also stated that the relatively small number of children in private school classes makes it possible to ensure good discipline among the children, which is a key factor linked to academic performance. Good discipline is far less likely to be achieved in UPE schools, where the number of children is large, posing a challenge to teachers to control the class; large numbers also hamper effective teaching and learning.

'Two girls joined our school from a UPE school in primary 6; we could not keep one of them here because she could not read words in English! Yet a primary 3 child here could read a whole sentence! And not only that, she was also very rude when answering teachers.'
Source: Teacher at Gallary Junior School Mukono, Uganda

'It is not enough to get children into schools and retain them there. What matters is how effectively they are being educated and how effectively resources are being used to promote learning.'
Source: Teacher in Mityana

Teacher absenteeism is one indicator of poor efficiency. On average, about 19 per cent of teachers were absent from their school on days when they should be working during the UDES survey. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the rate of teacher presence in class (as reported by pupils to their parents) has a strong correlation to the decision on which school the child should attend. Private schools offer better performance on at least some key measures of school quality.

'One teacher who did not even have [teaching] qualifications, but was very committed to his job was followed by parents wherever he went [whichever school he taught in]'
Source: Parent

Rogers and his co-authors (Kremer, 2004) find that in India, teacher absence is one-third lower in private than in public schools. There is more regular and rigorous supervision of both the teachers and children in the private school by the head teacher and the proprietors of the school, since there is an element of having to make a profit. Consequently, teachers demonstrate more responsibility and commitment in private schools.

It is worth noting that district-level inspectors and Centre Co-ordinating Tutors usually visit all recognised/registered schools two or three times a term, spending barely 20 minutes in each class they visit. This is due to logistical impediments and the long distances between the many schools assigned to them. Face-to-face interactions between the supervisor and the teacher in public schools are very rare.

School facilities

The data below suggests that government schools are overall slightly better resourced in terms of infrastructure, especially in sanitation facilities, compared to private schools.[37] It is noteworthy that urban government schools have more infrastructure than the average government and private school. In view of the fact that more people are choosing to send their children to private school, it seems that private schools are making up for this lack of infrastructure with dedicated and hardworking staff, and an average teacher-pupil ratio of 1:35. This enables teachers to give adequate

Table 6.8 Primary school facilities in Lira District, 2007

	Averages			*Case study schools*	
Facilities	*Government*	*Private*	*Urban govt*	*Canon Lawrence (govt)*	*Cornerstone (Private)*
Classrooms	8	12	12	25	14
Infant classrooms	7	0	3	4	0
Total	15	12	15	29	14
Library	0	2	0	0	1
Store	1	1	1	1	0
Offices	2	3	1	3	0
Staffroom	1	1	0	0	0
Teachers	7	8	11	16	9
Girls' latrines	9	7	16	16	3
Boys' latrines	9	6	13	15	2
Total	18	13	29	31	5
Teachers' houses	3	2	4	2	1
Desks	168	152	185	114	197

attention to each child and hence improve the effectiveness of instruction and quality of learning.

Level of parental involvement in children's education

Parents' involvement in school issues makes a school better according to the Uganda DHS EdData Survey 2001. Parents' contribution in public schools is mostly material, rather than their providing views and ideas. Unlike in the government schools, parents find it easier to contribute their views in private schools and these are then implemented. The survey further asserts that paying fees makes private schools more accountable to parents.

Threats That Private Schools Present to Government Schools

The threats that private schools present to government schools, as summed up by one district education officer:

- Private schools are more popular in terms of academic performance;
- Government schools tend to be more relaxed in terms of morality and discipline; private schools are stricter;
- The number of private schools is increasing every year, which is a threat to enrolments in government schools; and
- 'All informed parents are now investing in education by sending their children to private schools.'

Recommendations

Current and potential roles of government in private school provision

In Uganda, overall enrolment of children of school-going age (6–12) stands at 84 per cent; overall enrolment shot up from 2m in 1996 just before the advent of Universal Primary Education (UPE) to about 7.3m in 2003. Even with these tremendous increases in school enrolments, the government has acknowledged the need for non-state education provision. One of the recommendations mentioned by interview participants was that government should provide an enabling environment for private schools, as this will contribute to achieving 'Education for All' (EFA).

One of the important roles of the state in private education is regulation to ensure the quality of education. Regulation could include ensuring the adequacy of financial resources and learning and teaching facilities, ensuring that content taught conforms to the recommended primary school national curriculum and ensuring that teaching staff are all qualified. This calls for the increased and active involvement of the state in financing, supervising and providing continuous professional development of teachers for quality education provision. The initiative of funding private schools that charged less than USh10,000 per term during the first four years of implementing UPE may be invaluable if it can be reviewed and structured in line with the unique target groups of pupils and the environments in which the private schools operate.

Furthermore, earmarking funds for low-cost private primary schools in the Medium-Term Budget Framework (MTBF) and the three-year national, district and lower local government development plans may pay dividends. In recognition of the role that low-cost private primary schools in Uganda are making towards achievement of the education MDGs, financial support to ease bottlenecks – especially in terms of meeting the remuneration costs of teachers – would probably see private schools play a more significant and effective role in education access and quality provision. Lessons on such funding modalities could be drawn from the health sector, where some private health provision is funded under the government financing mechanism.

The involvement of government may also include providing teaching and learning materials, or at least providing subsidies on teaching and learning resources or tax exemptions on capital investments, such as building costs made by private schools.

In-service support should be provided to teachers in private schools through continuous professional development (CPD) by the Centre Co-ordination Tutors (CCTs). Supervision visits by CCTs and District Inspectors of Schools should be strengthened in private schools. Alongside the ongoing teacher-development courses, it would be useful for private schoolteachers to be involved in one-off or periodic teacher training events, such as in the PIASCY programme.

Uganda: study materials

Comparison of government and private case study schools

	Government (Grade I)	Private[38] (Grade I)
Teachers' training, qualifications, support received and daily roles	22 teachers: 10 female and 12 male All teachers are grade 3 or grade 5 by training (it's a requirement that all teachers must be qualified, i.e. must hold at least a grade 3 certificate) Some grade 3 teachers have been enrolled on the continuous professional development courses (CPDs), conducted by Centre Co-ordinating Tutors (CCTs) through core Primary Teachers Colleges (PTCs) At least once a month, supervision visits by CCTs and school inspectors, especially in classes with teachers on CPD Refresher courses for teachers are held regularly and all teachers are entitled to attend There are opportunities for up-grading qualifications through CPD Teaching resources are received from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) through the CCT. They also receive subsidies for textbooks by applying to central government (MoES) through the official textbook supplier All teachers are expected to strictly adhere to government standards, e.g. teachers' code of conduct in exhibiting professionalism In-school supervisory measures conducted through assessment and approval of teachers' schemes of work	About 70 per cent of teachers possess at least grade 3 certificate, and 30 per cent are untrained There is no systematic training or refresher training organised for teachers and no supervision visits from school inspectors Typical day for P4–P7:[39] 8:30–10:30 Classes 10:30–11:00 Break time 11: 00–1:00 Classes 1:00–2:00 Lunch break 2: 00–3:50 Free, but guided, pupils' activities 3:50–4:00 Giving homework All pupils P4–P7 have homework everyday; P1–P3 lessons end at 3pm Quality assurance realised through: • Assessment of teachers by head teacher, e.g. sitting in class, ensuring that homework is given and all books marked, jointly preparing schemes of work and a few lesson plans • Implementation of schemes of work and thorough lesson planning • Ensuring teachers have textbooks • Refresher training for teachers organised by CCT at various centres (only a few teachers benefit) 'The only supervisory support received from government is inspection of school activities – mainly to give conditions on number of teachers, desks, construction of toilets etc.'

Children's school attendance	Average attendance for lower classes is more erratic than for middle and higher classes. Average attendance rates are placed at 76 per cent, 82 per cent and 84 per cent in the three levels respectively, with minimal variations between boys and girls	Average Attendance is 95 per cent – boys more absent than girls, as their parents will keep them away from school more for labour
Teachers' remuneration and other incentives	Minimum gross salary is USh 120,000 per month. The pay varies – but average is USh200,000. This is paid monthly – even during school holidays – and there is an annual salary increment of 21,000; teachers are entitled to gratuity payments **Other benefits** Teachers are entitled to lunch and a break for tea The biggest single expenditure is teachers' salaries, which takes up nearly 65 per cent of a school's total budget (source: Interviews with head teacher/proprietor of private school in Mbale)	Salary level depends on length of employment at school A new teacher earns USh80,000 per month; after one term, pay increases to USh100,000. Maximum pay is USh150,000 **Other benefits** Free breakfast and free lunch Free education in the school for one child of each teacher Free house/accommodation; a large plot of land where teachers can farm *Note*: Teachers are not paid during school holidays, hence they receive salary for about nine months in a calendar year
Class – dynamics	Average teacher-pupil ratio is 1:70 for lower classes; 1:91 for middle classes; and 1:50 for upper classes. Teachers follow a new curriculum: this is thematic for P1–P3, transitional for P4 and subject-based for P5–P7 Strict adherence to policy on mother tongue – although with difficulty	Average teacher pupil ratio 1:35 Children are more active and engaged – teacher in a better position to provide support to each child; discipline ensured through relatively low teacher-pupil ratio Transition from one class to another is not automatic; a minimum of 200 marks (50 per cent) in all the four subjects is a prerequisite. This calls for more academic effort on the part of teachers and pupils Language of instruction for all classes is English (contrary to government policy).[40] However, the government's old syllabus and curriculum are used

Challenges faced by teachers	'Unstable school curriculum' – which is frequently reviewed and changed Abrupt policy changes in education, such as policy on language of instruction, caning and promotion of children from one class to another Meagre salaries – 'I am being underpaid! Only USh180,000/= per month!'; late salary payments Undisciplined pupils – the large number of pupils makes it difficult to ensure discipline	Teaching lower classes in local language is very difficult because children in nursery school are taught in English. In addition, teaching materials in local language are scarce and technical support is inadequate The teaching and learning materials, which are provided by the school, are limited, e.g. textbooks, mathematical instruments etc. Workload is heavy because teachers are few. This is aggravated by 'little payment, which cannot cater for all the basic personal needs. In addition, because our directors are also teachers, if their salaries are delayed, so are ours.' Lack of classrooms, a library or chalkboards Opportunities for capacity building by CCTs and further studies in institutions are not provided; extra-curricular activities like debates and networking among others are not facilitated, making participation in competition difficult
Challenges faced by parents		'Schools fees are a challenge, but usually we talk to the school authorities to allow a grace period' Price-fluctuations of essential goods e.g. sugar, soap etc. is expensive for parents Buying foodstuff, e.g. *posho* and beans Other expenses, e.g. medical fees every term, even if a child doesn't fall sick Buying a ready-made school uniform from the school, and scholastic materials
Extra-curricula activities	Sports, music, dance and drama (MDD) – government schools send pupils for competitions, thus helping to make pupils more confident	Sports and MDD are mainly organised by district education officials, and sometimes private schools are not considered for competitions. In particular, there is seldom financial support for private schools to participate, especially at district or higher levels

Interview notes from Uganda study

Interviews with District Inspector of Schools and two teachers on government versus private schools

	Government schools	Private schools
Strengths	Parents enjoy benefit of government aid e.g. payment of teachers' salaries, grants to run school activities	Focus on performance by both teachers and pupils.
	Schools are led by the rules and regulations of government	Administrator is the sole overseer, so it is easier to plan and easily identify weakness and make necessary correction. No bureaucracy
	Teachers are protected by government acts, e.g. salary payments and retirement benefits	Community schools which remain private tend to consider the role of the community in management decisions
	Schools are open to frequent inspections and to government support, e.g. during times of disaster	Private schools tend to perform better academically than UPE schools
	More secure finance (grants for UPE)	Private schools instil more discipline in children; they do not adhere to some stringent government policies like not caning children
	Good infrastructure – classrooms, teachers' houses and administration blocks. Large land plots for expansion	Parents are more responsive to demands made by private schools, e.g. provision of textbooks for children
	Teachers have better pay (on the government scale). Food for teachers is sometimes better and teachers have opportunities to access capacity building initiatives, joint conferences etc. Incentives are given for marking papers, attending workshops etc.	There is an almost nil dropout rate, because parents have had to pay school fees; they thus force their children to study hard and remain in school
	Teachers have access to loans, and their workload is lighter. They have good opportunities for professional development and good job security. Teachers in government schools are pensionable, enjoy gratuities and have access to further studies.	Demands levied on schools by parents of private schools are much more focused on improving performance of pupils
	Teachers enjoy freedom of speech.	Talent development is high and there is strong support from parents

	They are also better in other extra curricular activities because they have better facilities.	towards the development of the school, especially through the PTA Good time management There are minimal complaints from parents, because payments made by parents are invested in the administration of the school Good welfare for pupils, teachers and support staff
Weaknesses	Bureaucracy, e.g. in disciplining teachers, gives room to laissez-faire type of administration Massive recruitment has meant 'hiring ineffective and rotten teachers' Transition and dropout rates are very high because of free service	Meetings are infrequent, thus power tends to be abused; no freedom of expression for teachers Sometimes parents are taken for granted, their views are not considered

Teachers' views on why people send their children to private school

Why do you think parents choose to send their children to private school?
• Teachers are very hardworking, active and punctual for lessons • Pupils are more disciplined and smarter • Owing to extra academic effort by teachers and pupils, the syllabus is completed early and adequate time is made for revision • Adequate teacher-pupil ratio, average 1:35 • If a child doesn't know how to read and write, they are given special attention and made to learn fast; because pupils are few per class, it is thus easier to treat each child individually • Efficiency and quality • 'In second term alone, we received 30 pupils from neighbouring UPE schools – due to better performance of pupils and speak good English' [sic] • 'Poor performance by UPE school caused parents to bring/transfer their children to Cornerstone; most if not all were from neighbouring UPE schools' • Good relationship among parents and teachers; parents easily monitor school activities and children's performance • All pupils speak English as the official language, unlike in government schools • Pupils are allowed to study on credit for some time to enable parents to find money • 'Children are given breakfast and lunch, unlike in government schools. In government schools it has just been piloted, but might not work because of [the] large number of pupils.' • Because of good teaching services and constant supervision of teachers by directors • Because we do external examinations, especially exams from schools in Central Uganda • Because rules and regulations in private schools are strictly followed; this makes parents feel that their children are safe • Enrolment of cross-cultural pupils • 'Because we have good rate of assessment compared to the neighbouring government school, this improves our performance in exams' • 'Because we are not embracing the thematic curriculum and mother-tongue policy [teaching using local language in lower classes] like in government schools, hence parents are motivated to bring their children to this school because we teach in English.' • Curriculum and syllabus are strictly followed • 'We also expose pupils to mass media, tours to develop talents in all corners, which parents highly recommend and this is lacking in government schools.' • 'Because this school has a conducive learning environment; no vehicle, noise etc.'

Parents on why they sent their children to private school

Why did you decide to send your children to private school?
• Standards and academic excellence; expectations being met fully – 'performance of my children has improved from what it was when they were in UPE school'
• Children are made to speak English, even in P2 or lower classes
• Competition is high; pupils are made to work harder by not being given exaggerated marks and not promoted to higher classes automatically
• Teachers have a good relationship with pupils and encourage pupils who are not so active – unlike in government schools, where there is an 'I don't care' attitude
• Strict supervision of teachers by the directors, which makes them perform better – no dodging lessons.
• Children are promoted on merit, and the standard is high
• Teachers are time conscious
• The number of pupils is limited, which enables teachers to interact and know all pupils individually
• Private schoolteachers have good discipline; a director would not want to have teachers who would spoil the image of the school
• Pupils are taken for study tours, although at the parents' expense; parents of UPE schools do not understand and are never willing to do so, because they know everything [in the government school] is for free
• Continuous assessments given to pupils, e.g. weekly, monthly, termly; children also also exposed to external exams (past papers are sourced from Kampala schools)
• 'My children were doing poorly in [the] UPE school; that is why we sent them to private schools'
• 'Private school pupils have discipline, because of closeness to teachers; they are forced to speak only in English, they respect their teachers because of them being role models'

Primary school pupils on choice of school

Interviewee: **AKICA, RACHAEL** **Private school pupil**
Details: P6 pupil; Age: 12; Sex: Female

What I like about my school:
School has very good teachers compared to neighbouring UPE schools
Schools environment is good for learning; has enough desks
Pupils are few, thus good discipline and we pay attention to the teacher in class

What I don't like about my school:
Some pupils do not want to speak English and are giving animal bones to carry, which is very bad
Sometimes we are not given enough food, or we miss food and even plates are not enough

Relationship with Canon Lawrence Demonstration Primary School (a government school):
I have some friends in that school, but I do not like anything or admire my friends in that school

Why parents sent her to Cornerstone (a private school):
Good performance of the school compared to the nearby schools

Interviewee: **RUMA, DANIEL** **Private school pupil**
Details: P7 pupil; Age: 11; Sex: Male

What I like about my school:
Good teaching
Teachers follow time and teach all subjects
Good sanitation – emphasis put on smartness
Pupils are provided food and water for drinking and hand washing
Clean toilet
Clean classrooms and not crowded
Clean environment; flowers make the school look so beautiful
Availability of textbooks, though some are missing
Pupils are disciplined and respectful to teachers
Enough playground

What I don't like about my school:
School is not fenced
Children do not have enough playground and balls are never available for both girls and boys
Water comes from the tap, which may give children disease

Relationship with Canon Lawrence Demonstration Primary School (a government school):
Has some friends in the government school
Football matches between the two schools

Why parents sent him to Cornerstone (a private school):
School is good
Population of pupils is limited
Children are very smart and disciplined
Teachers do not drink, [and] they do not miss lessons. They come to teach every day
School is near home

Interviewee: **EMAN, RONALD** **Government school pupil**
Details: P6 pupil; Age: 12; Sex: Male

What I like about my school:
Free education
Enough seats/desks for all pupils
Teachers are always punctual for lessons

What I don't like about my school:
No urinals, not enough toilets
No lunch provided for pupils
Children are over worked e.g. having to cut grass in the school grounds
What I like about the neighbouring private primary school:
Many toilets
The children have a nice smart uniform
They are served lunch at school

What I think children at private school like about my school:
Spacious playing ground
Pen-pal club is not in other schools
Participation in games and sports; Cornerstone seldom participates

Why I think my teachers are always punctual:
They are motivated by USh2,000 paid by each child per term

Why my parents sent me to government school:
Less costly in terms of school fees
Teachers are active and many

Interviewee: **EJANG, HILDA** **Government school pupil**
Details: P6 pupil; Age: 14; Sex: Female

What I like about my school:
Good singing club/school choir
Netball
General cleanliness and cleaning (dressing) room for older girls
Good performance
Gender sensitivity is observed i.e. only female teachers attend to girls regarding personal issues
Children's rights are observed

What I don't like about my school:
Boys are violent to girls – fighting
Some teachers use vulgar words, especially towards older girls, e.g. being insulted because of having big breasts; they say you are old enough to produce children
Most pupils are undisciplined – because of the large numbers, teachers cannot control all of them

Do you report these cases of teachers?
One case was reported, and parents during a PTA meeting cautioned the teacher

What I like about the neighbouring private primary school:
Dressing smartly
Better performance compared to us
Better feeding – porridge for breakfast and also served lunch

What I think children at private school like about my school:
Nice compound, covered with trees
Children's rights are observed; children are rarely beaten by teachers
Pupils are so many, which gives a good opportunity to create many friends

Why my parents sent me to government school:
Full-time electricity, even at night for revision
It is nearer home
It is affordable; we pay only 6,500 shillings per year

Interviewee: **JASPER** **Government school pupil**
Details: **P5 pupil; Age: 13; Sex: Male**

What I like about my school:
Effective teaching

What I don't like about my school:
Day pupils are being cheated in terms of learning time compared to pupils in [the] boarding section, who are even taught at night
What do you think can enhance your learning?
Availability of reading materials, especially simplified textbooks and pamphlets
Availability of sports attire, e.g. uniform, boots etc.

Why my parents sent me to government school:
School is nearer home
Children are friendly
Sports and games for all pupils

Parents on the choice of school

Interviewee: **ABWANGO, BENSON** **Parent of pupil at government school**
Details: Sex: Male; Occupation: Peasant farmer

'...I have two [children], both are boys; one is in P4 another in P2 ... they are both in Canon Lawrence [the UPE school]. I had to send them there, as you see my condition, you go for what is cheap...what your pocket can afford!'

'...because I wanted to enjoy free UPE provided by government; after all the government has used the taxes we pay in various ways to pay the teachers, so why do I have to pay teachers elsewhere again?.... I made the decision myself as head of the family to send both of them there...'

'Yes it is free education from government. I expect my children to study for free and that is good for a poor man like me.'

'It [UPE] is good, but corruption is spoiling its objectives... I hear that some money gets lost even before it reaches the school, and that some of the money is misused at school ... but generally, I am happy because I am not paying school fees and this is good for me...'

'I only pay development fund and PTA funds, which [are] less than 7,000 shillings per child per term...when the season is not bad, I can easily get that money... by selling a basin of groundnuts per term... and of course buying for them pencils and books.... since they spoil the books and loose pencils almost every week, I have to buy others!'

'... I think government schools have many teachers, large classrooms and generally we pay less money [compared to the private schools] ...and the members of the school management are selected from us – the parents ...although this is mainly the rich parents who are selected.'

'... Well, there are a few things, for example I don't like the way they sometimes transfer good teachers, ... even without consulting us, you just hear that teacher so-and-so has now been transferred to another school! I do not know whether that is a punishment from the Ministry (of Education and Sports) or a grudge with the district people, so they send that teacher to a bad school... Also the school is not well renovated, for example the walls are very dirty, it seems classrooms are not cleaned ... my children come back every day with very dirty uniforms, yet they have chairs!... and the latrines are very dirty... Teachers are always complaining of late salary payments, which affects their work of teaching ...'

Interviewee: **Ms. ASIIMWE, JENNIFER** **Parent of pupil at private school**
Details: Sex: Female; Occupation: Secretary – single parent
Number of children: 3; Children in private school: 1 (P4, a girl)

Why did you choose to send your child to a private school?
Good and constant teaching
School near home – reduces distance
School is morally good; no harassment of children, no theft, pupils are protected compared to government schools
Conducive environment for learning

Understanding of UPE:
Everything about it is negative; children are not under control and not well guided
Classes are overcrowded
Poor teaching; slow learners are not considered, which makes parents opt for private schools
Harassment by other pupils, because of large number of pupils
No protection by teachers
Teachers don't give assignments or mark pupils' books

Only good thing about UPE:
Free education, but very expensive in the long run. Experience she had from her daughter studying in a UPE school: 'she couldn't write, read or speak a single word in English, yet she was in P5! I moved her to a private school and she was demoted to P4'

What I like about private schools:
Teachers committed to teaching
Results-oriented and sometimes they teach over to finish the syllabus
Teachers [are] very hardworking in fear of dismissal
They have strategic locations, which provide [a] good learning environment with no noise
Good [food] given to children, which makes them feel at home
Classes are not so crowded; limited number of children
Good structures and regular renovation
Keen on welfare and health of children
Easy access, as it is nearer home
Good moral upbringing of children in the school; children taught how to pray

What I dislike about private schools:
Sometimes children harassed if fees not cleared early enough, which may make a child miss exams
Everything is about money, thus sometimes management doesn't listen to pleas of parents
Sometimes management and directors are aggressive to teachers – they don't listen, which makes teachers' work under a lot of tension
Short-term contracts given to teachers could demoralise [them]

Gaps in Cornerstone (my daughter's private school):
Wrangle over money by the proprietors
Accountability not given to parents
Delay in paying staff salaries
Sometimes school closes early, because director doesn't want to release money to buy food, clean water bills
Some parents don't bring or take [a] long [time] to bring food items for school feeding

Proprietor of Cornerstone (private) Primary School

Background to the school's establishment:

- Four neighbouring secondary schoolteachers joined together and started the school as a nursery school for their children in 2000
- School started as a nursery school, with seven children (four belonging to the proprietors), but had 20 pupils by end of the first term
- School started with two teachers, who were well motivated
- Parents of children requested that the proprietor open a primary section because of good performance, discipline and smartness of pupils
- Primary section was opened in 2002
- PTA was formed in 2001; it helped in starting the primary section. PTA helped in mobilising the community, who came to support the school, including the Church of Uganda
- Got a loan of 2 million shillings from Stanbic Land. Land cost USh400,000; 1.6 million shillings used to start up construction work, plus personal contributions by proprietors

Motivation for starting school:

- Children were hungry in school; this affected their performance in class. They did a mini survey before opening a primary section
- Availability of spacious land
- Poor performance of UPE schools
- Demand by parents for a school within the community, so as to avoid children travelling the distance into town
- Wanted another source of making money
- Requests made by parents of children in nursery section
- Population of 'working class' parents is high; they prefer their children to stay for a long time in school
- Scholarships are given to best performers in each class, who then study for free the following terms; others given gifts, e.g. books etc.
- Keenness on children looking smart

School management:

- Board of Directors (BOD), which is the supreme administrative organ – four teachers
- The Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Recruitment of teachers is done by BOD; here emphasis is placed on teachers having a minimum grade 3 certificate
- Head teachers, for primary and nursery sections, are in charge of running daily activities/implementation, supported by deputy head teachers, directors of studies and by teachers
- Each of the four directors are assigned different roles and responsibilities:
  - Director in charge of finance: supervises the bursar, follows up head teacher on payment of fees etc.
  - Director in charge of welfare, i.e. both for pupils and teachers
  - Director of infrastructural development, e.g. construction work
  - BOD Chairman supervises all directors and co-ordinators all activities, he is the official spokesperson of the school
- Some children are being funded under the Church of Uganda by Compassion International in both nursery and primary for five years
- No financial and material support from government

Current standing:
- Grade of school: 4
- Teacher-pupil ratio 1:56
- Nine teachers (three female and six male)
- Nursery school and primary schoolteachers are being trained at the school's expense – 17 student teachers: 12 women and five men are currently being trained
- No examination centre yet, mainly due to lack of examination hall
- School not yet graded, but registered: grading is done by MoES in consultation with UNEB, who do the registration
- The school status is mixed primary school with nine qualified teachers and seven classrooms

School is registered under the following conditions:
- Trained registered teachers
- Training materials, e.g. classroom, books etc.
- Adequate space
- Minimum of 15 children

Future plans:
- Intend to make the school boarding only
- Construct more infrastructure
- Introduce computer learning and study into the curriculum
- Life skills, e.g. agriculture
- Provide quality education cheaply, using available local resources
- Having an orderly compound that provides a learning environment

Relationship with neighbouring UPE schools:
- Enjoys good working relationship
- From 2005–06, candidates of Cornerstone did their exams at Canon Lawrence Demonstration School
- Have held friendly debates, which sustain the relationship
- Even the children of teachers, including the headmistress of Canon Lawrence Demonstration School, study at Cornerstone
- Some teachers from neighbouring UPE schools help foster teaching at Cornerstone during weekends
- Some teachers from government schools do visit, as part of a programme called 'team teaching.' This is a method where teachers jointly prepare lessons, i.e. one presents and the rest monitor/listen, and then later discuss and make necessary changes. This has assisted those teachers who are not well versed with some topics
- Cornerstone is performing better than neighbouring government schools in primary leaving examination (PLE) and is appreciated by community
- Quality of education in Cornerstone is far better, e.g. availability of books, English-speaking and debates

Relationship with District Education Department:
- Inspection by District Inspector of Schools; occasionally the Centre Co-ordination Tutor (CCT) visits the school; on a few occasions, one or two teachers are invited to attend district-level workshops, especially on the curriculum
- Visits by District Education Officer (DEO) staff are mostly for inspection of school activities; this typically includes giving conditions on the number of teachers, desks, construction of latrines etc. Such visits are rarely for professional development

- The school follows the same syllabus as government schools. In addition, the government examination timetable and school calendar are also followed. However, the school does more than the government-stipulated extra curricula activities, such as debating clubs and environment clubs
- The thematic policy and method of teaching lower classes (P1–P3) in local language is only used once in a while; it is not effective and not much welcomed

Challenges:

- Insufficient funds to construct adequate infrastructure
- School not yet to full standard, because classes have rough floors and window shutters
- Paying teachers' salaries
- Meeting community expectations and aspirations of producing better results – so the school even teaches on weekends; P6 and P7 pupils are now staying in the boarding section
- Reading materials – books and instruction materials hard to acquire
- Ability to absorb growing enrolment, while maintaining a manageable teacher-pupil ratio. The mission of the school is to have a classroom manageable by a teacher (1:45). If the number is bigger, classes are divided into streams
- Retention of teachers – they leave any time if they get a better offer

Interview with opinion leader

Interviewee: **MZEE, JOHN ATIA OTIM** **Retired Education Civil Servant**
Details: **76 years old**

The state of private schools in Uganda:
- Quality of education varies across the three categories of private, community and public schools
- Private schools tend to focus more on high scores than real learning
- What is the value of a private school amidst UPE schools?
- The value of a private school is that the UPE school can't satisfy everybody – government schools only serve the interests of the poor people
- They give satisfaction to people who can afford to pay for their children's education

Advantages of private schools over UPE schools:
- If well supervised, private schools provide high-quality education and results, especially if initiated and owned by people with an educational vision and life objectives
- They put a lot of emphasis on the creation of conducive learning conditions

Weaknesses of private schools:
- Most of them put a lot on emphasis on monetary gain – they have a profit-driven attitude, which in most cases compromises their primary objectives
- They tend to focus more on results, so as to attract more children to their school, whereas education should be holistic. They seldom consider children's personal development and growth

Weaknesses of government schools:
- Weak government policy, e.g. the introduction of PLE was faulty in terms of policy, planning, timing and structure. No consideration was given to teacher-pupil ratios, number of textbooks, number of classrooms etc.
- The schools are getting overwhelmed by the number of children per class
- Children are not being considered properly; they cannot read, write and speak even in their local language

Positive side of government schools:
- Having large number of children provides a good opportunity for social interaction and togetherness
- Free education to poor children
- Most teachers are professionally well trained

Areas of improvement in government schools:
- Increasing number of classrooms, number of teachers, desks, textbooks etc.
- Improvement in PLE system should begin from above, i.e. from ministerial/policy level down to school administration level
- Primary teachers' colleges should admit only those students who pass 'O' level (senior 4) well and should initiate a system of follow-up, supervision and monitoring of teachers who pass through their colleges. There are so many cases of people who join these colleges with 'borrowed' academic papers from friends or relatives. Such 'fools' later become 'teachers' and end up fostering the next generation of 'fools' in the classes that they teach. It is not a surprise that we have many children failing their primary school exams

Improvement – private schools:

- They should recruit teachers of substance, not 'rejects'
- They should start having a career master/mistress to guide children, other than just putting emphasis on academic excellence and high results
- The aim of private education should be filling gaps left by government schools. They should therefore include parents in school administration; parents and the general community should be involved in the activities of such schools to ensure dual ownership

Role of parents and community:

- Parents and the general community should collectively know that school ownership is their role. They should thus show interest by participating in school activities, since it is for the benefit of their children
- Parents and community alike should help train children and behave responsibly towards them at all times

Historically in Lango sub-region:

Private education started in the 1960s. Private schools played a crucial role in the development of education in Lango sub-region. By the early 1960s, there were two private primary schools: Canon Dongo P.S in Boroboro and Okae Jepenia P.S. in Aduku. Such schools absorbed children of the elite and those who could not travel to distant schools; government schools were very few at that time. For example, Hon Charles Odyek Okot (RIP) the first MP from Lango West in Uganda's first parliament, excelled through private primary school up to university.

Conclusions

There is an important role for private schools in achieving EFA alongside public education (UPE). The government alone may not be able to cope with the demand for basic education and therefore needs non-state actors such as private individuals, institutions and non-governmental organisations to contribute to achieving EFA. Public education alone may not be adequate to guarantee all children access to quality education, because of resource constraints in the public sector. It is these gaps in public education that the private schools fill. Private schools can help to achieve EFA through proper regulation, supervision and government support in both financial and material terms.

Conversion of community schools into government schools

In response to the sudden and dramatic expansion in pupil's enrolment, the Ugandan government embarked on owning more schools, mainly by taking over formerly community-founded schools. The figure below shows that following the massive enrolment in the 1996–97, the Government of Uganda responded by establishing close to 2,000 primary schools between 1997 and 1999 alone.

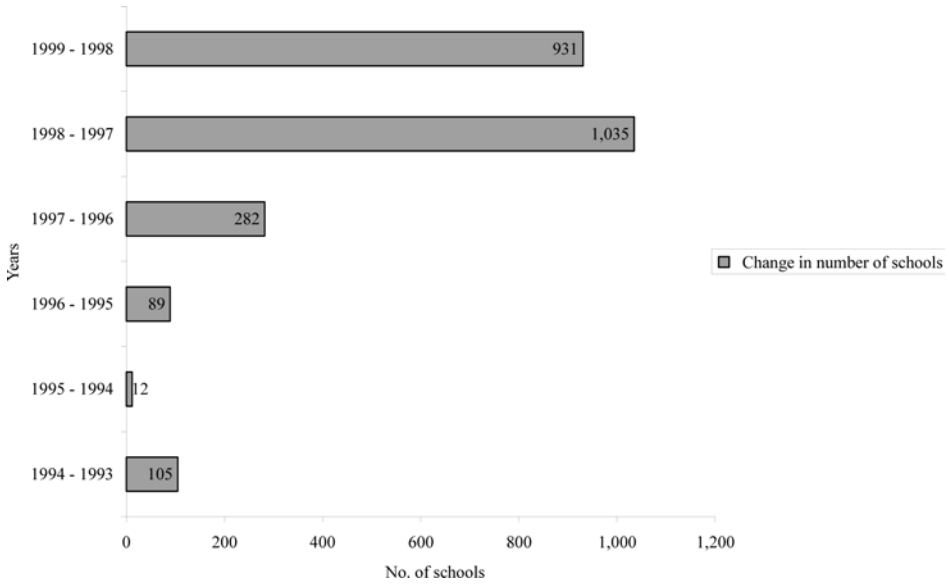

Figure 6.2 Change in the number of schools in Uganda 1993–1999
Source: UNESCO (2000) The EFA Assessment 2000 Country Report: Uganda

Management of private schools in Uganda

Every school owner is mandated to manage his/her school in a manner in which the objectives of education are supreme. The owner charges school dues as prescribed by the Management Committee/Board of Governors. Designated government officials may issue instructions on aspects of school management, with a view to safeguarding the interests of pupils. Every school is required to prepare an annual budget estimate and annual audited accounts. On request by designated officials, these documents should be availed for inspection. This means private schools in Uganda are not autonomous or independent, despite being non-state entities. Private schools are bound by rules set by the Ministry of Education.

Procedures for establishing private schools

Procedures for establishing a private school include application to the permanent secretary or chief administration officer/town clerk on evidence of good repute and necessary funds to manage the institution. Entrepreneurs then seek permission from local authorities at sub-county level. This is to find out whether it is within the Sub-County Development Plan to have a school where the entrepreneur plans to establish one, to ensure that the school's plans are reflected in the overall Education Development Plan of the respective area, and that the school plans meet the educational needs of the country or the area. The sub-county officials then recommend the entrepreneur to the district authorities. The District Inspector inspects the site for the new school to check whether it fulfils regulations. Other requirements for registration include the following:

Possession of building plans, lease offers and/or land titles;

- Adequate school facilities, including physical structures like classrooms, latrines, school furniture and enough land for a playground;
- Classrooms and latrines;
- A 'suitably qualified' head teacher, and evidence that the teachers to be engaged are eligible to teach in the type of school (teachers trained to grade 2 and 3 certificate level);
- Adequate terms and conditions of service of employment for teaching and non-teaching staff, with contractual terms of agreement;
- The school will not refuse admission to any pupil on any discriminatory grounds;
- Short- and long-term school plans;
- A management and governance body constituted in accordance with government guidelines;
- Financial strength/financial statement; and

- Other bodies e.g. Parent Teacher Association, school management committee to create checks and balance etc.

Language policy

The use of mother tongue as the language for instruction comes with a couple of challenges: some districts do not have written orthography, while others do not even have district language boards. The dearth of instructional and learning materials in the local language poses yet another challenge. In urban and peri-urban areas (and in districts which have many tribal settlements), choice of 'the mother tongue' is not obvious; similarly, the posting and distribution of trained teachers does not favour equitable distribution of personnel across the country. So far in Uganda, there has been very limited training of teachers in the use of mother-tongue/local language as a medium of instruction.

Notes

1. Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES, 2003a).
2. Ibid.
3. £1 was equivalent to USh3373.26 in January 2008.
4. Interview with proprietor of private school in Mbale town.
5. MoES (2003a).
6. Ibid.
7. Interviews with District Inspector of Schools, Lira District.
8. Ministry of Education and Sports (2003b).
9. MoES (2003a).
10. Ministry of Education and Sports: Sector PEAP Revision Paper (November 2003).
11. Ibid.
12. Ministry of Education and Sport (2002a).
13. Ministry of Education and Sport (2002b).
14. It was erroneously assumed that by 2007 all community schools would be 'converted' into government schools.
15. This is estimated to be about 68 per cent of overall national expenditure on education. The Indicative Medium Term Expenditure Framework FY 2003/04–2006/07 places total expenditure on the education sub-sector (including donor and projects) at USh723.87 billion in financial year (FY) 2006/07, with primary education teachers wages projected at USh258.12 billion (Oct 2003) and primary education conditional grants and district development grants estimated at USh47.90 billion and USh65.2 billion respectively.
16. MoES (2002a).
17. In the Ugandan system, a grade 3 teacher's certificate is the minimum requirement to teach in lower primary school. All teachers must also hold a Uganda certificate of education with credits in at least two science subjects, English and maths. This is the result of four years of

secondary education. The grade 3 teacher's course takes two years and is conducted in primary teachers' colleges (previously known as teachers' training colleges). The grade 4 teacher's certificate is a one-year course for upper primary schools. This can then be followed on with a three-year upgrading course, which leads to the grade 5 certificate for secondary school teachers.

18. EMIS Annual Census, 2006.
19. Interview with District Inspector of Schools, Lira district, 2007.
20. Ministry of Education and Sport *Education Abstracts 2004.*
21. Ministry of Education and Sport *Education abstracts 2006.*
22. Kitaev, I. (1999).
23. The annual primary school calendar in Uganda consists of three terms of 10–13 weeks each.
24. Currently Uganda has 70 districts, with Northern Uganda constituting 41 per cent of the total number of districts.
25. With respect to Uganda, 'class' is used to denote children's year group whereas 'grade' is used with respect to teacher's qualification and 'grade' of school.
26. Ministry of Education and Sport (2006).
27. MoES (2002b).
28. EMIS *Annual Census 2007.* This table was developed from data for 178 (out of 214) government and two (out of nine) private primary schools.
29. EMIS (2006).
30. This figure includes 11 schools whose ownership status was not stated.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. MoES (2002a).
34. Interview with District Inspector of Schools, Lira.
35. Excerpts of an interview held with the District Inspector of Schools, Lira District, and the director of a private school.
36. *Uganda DHS EdData Survey 2001.*
37. Data that was accessed during the study did not have adequate information on the quality of infrastructure.
38. Grade I is the highest grade and denotes a school with most of the required facilities and personnel in place.
39. As recommended by Government Education Policy, P4 is average nine years of age while P7 is average 12 years of age.
40. Government policy states that the language of instruction for P1–P4 should be mother tongue.