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**Teachers' understanding and classroom practices of quality education in
Ugandan primary education**

By

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DECLARATION

I, *Anaclet Mutiba Namanya*, registration number u14256496, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “*Teachers’ understanding and classroom practices of quality education in Ugandan primary education*” has been submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Philosophiae Doctor degree in Education Management, Law and Policy Studies at University of Pretoria. The work contained in this thesis is mine, is original and has never been submitted to any university for the award of a degree or its equivalent.

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RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.



DEDICATION

To my mother, Sabinah Mutiba, for raising me and introducing me to formal education. She did not have the opportunity to go through formal education but devoted her meagre resources to educating me.



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I now cherish the saying “*To slip does not mean to fall*”. He has seen me stagger, fall and lifted me up. He has witnessed my progress as we walked together and will see me walk alone as a result of his support. My supervisor, Professor Everard Weber, you are and ever will be my role model in academia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	Action Aid International Uganda
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
DEO	District Education Officer
DRT	Development Research and Training
EAC	East African Community
EDEFOP	European Centre for Development of Vocational Training
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPRC	Education Policy Review Commission
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GDP	Gross domestic product
GWPE	Government White Paper on Education
IADM	Inter-American Development Bank
IEC	International Electro-technical Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (the Netherlands)
ISO	International Standards Organization
IWA	International Workshop Agreement
JICA	Japan International Development Agency
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MUREC	Mildmay Uganda Research and Ethics Committee
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
NCR	New Curriculum Reform
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement



OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
O level	Ordinary level
PEAPs	Poverty Eradication Action Plans
PISA	The Program for International Student Assessment
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
TIQED	Teacher Inclusion in Quality Education Discourse
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHS	Uganda National Household Survey
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNNGOF	Uganda National NGO Forum
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPOLET	Universal Post Ordinary Level Education and Training
UPPET	Universal Post Primary Education and Training
USE	Universal Secondary Education
WB	World Bank



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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to ascertain how teachers' understanding and classroom practices affect the quality of Ugandan primary education. Several attempts have been made to define the concept of quality education. Both the practical and policy definitions of quality are derived from neoliberalism in terms of which examination scores are crucial. Teachers' understanding of quality education and their classroom practices have been neglected, despite the fact that these affect the way teachers teach and assess learners. The study was guided by three research questions: How do teachers perceive policies related to quality education? How do teachers practise quality education in the classrooms? and Why according to teachers do they practise quality education in the ways they do? The study was conducted at six purposively selected primary schools in Bushenyi district in the western region of Uganda. Owing to the nature of the research questions, a case study design was adopted. The study was guided by a qualitative approach with an interpretivist paradigm. Data were generated from unstructured interviews with six head teachers and eighteen teachers, while classroom observations were conducted with a further six teachers. In addition, a document analysis was done of relevant policies. The generated data were coded and analysed following a process of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. Atlas-ti software was used in the generation of linkages and networks in the data. The understanding of the internal structures and associations in the data helped in formulating the final explanations and inferences using content analysis. The study findings indicated that teachers understand quality education in different ways. Despite their wider understanding, what they practise tends to differ and is constrained by the existing national and school-specific policies on quality education. Moreover, classroom teachers are not consulted in the policy formulation process. The findings attest to the fact that the existing national policies are a reflection of the neoliberal movement that has influenced the meaning of quality education. Further, teachers practise quality education using a number of methods, but these were influenced by the environment in which they work and existing policies that focus on standards and accountability rather than the holistic, multipronged and long-term value of education. The study recommends that teachers' understanding of quality education should be incorporated in the formulation of education policies. Of importance, the government, through the line ministry, the MoES, should redesign the quality education parameters to go beyond academic performance to incorporate virtues of holistic teaching and learning, tolerance, citizenship, planning for the child's future and gaining of survival skills beyond the formal education and the associated formal jobs.

Key terms: Quality education, teachers' understanding, classroom practices, neoliberalism, primary education.



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To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, an English editor accredited by the South African Translators' Institute, have edited the doctoral thesis titled "Teachers' understanding and classroom practices of quality education in Ugandan primary education" by Anaclet Mutiba Namanya.

The onus is, however, on the author to make the changes and address the comments made.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Barnby".



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background

This study sought to ascertain the way teachers' understanding and classroom practices affect the quality of primary education in Uganda. The study was based on the existing literature that provides diverse definitions of quality education that are context specific, but which neglects the centrality of teachers' understanding and classroom practices as a factor that may shape and define the quality of primary education. Globally, education is considered a vital factor that stimulates economic growth and development (Byamugisha & Ogawa, 2010). This idea has been shaped and influenced by the global neoliberal market economies (Akkaymak, 2015) in which education focuses on raising individual productivity levels, enhancing competition, promoting entrepreneurship and the use of technology, as well as enabling people to use the available resources better and become more competitive.

From an international perspective, as Chomsky (2016), Abendroth and Portfilio (2015) and Ross and Gibson (2006) observe, the current agenda for education quality and especially with regard to the teaching-learning processes is entrenched in the history of capitalism and the associated failures over the last three decades as well as its global policies. These have compelled the ideological shift from economic liberalism to neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a modern theory that is characterised by free trade, reduced government expenditure on social services, marketisation, privatisation and the growth of individual enterprises (Chomsky, 2016). Across the globe, neoliberalism has gained support from international agencies for example the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). With this market-based notion, education quality is linked to the levels of national development (Barratt, Chawla-Duggan, Lowe, Nickel, & Ukpo, 2006) with a focus on reduced government expenditure, standardised tests, performativity and accountability (Hutchings, 2015). Depending on the level of national development, governments have formulated and implemented several policy reforms with an aim to improve the quality of education as well as meeting national state objectives. In Sweden and the Netherlands, for example, the aim of education has been its usefulness in stimulating national development. Specific national policies, therefore, have been formulated in that regard, and have stimulated a debate on the meaning and constructs



of quality. As Barratt et al. (2006) observe, the concept of quality education has been defined in various ways since any policy shift will also change the understanding and activities needed to generate quality education.

The educational policy reforms in the majority of the developed countries, African countries, as well as in Latin America and South Asia, are now influenced by international agencies such as the WB, the IMF and the IADB that are strong believers in the neoliberal discourse. In the education field, increased access to education through the free market enterprise, the reduction of government regulation, the marketisation of education, reduced government spending and privatising the education sector are remarkable features (Hickel, 2012). In Uganda, for example, as part of the global trend, the government embraced the agenda of the IMF and the WB, which along with other outside actors continue to guide Uganda's liberalisation reforms in service delivery, including education. This translated to the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy that, since the recommendations of the 1963 Castle Commission,¹ was launched in 1997 as part of the attempt to meet the universal Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since its introduction in 1977, UPE enrolment has increased from 3.1 million in 1996 (Bategeka & Okurut, 2006, p. 1) to 7,537,971 by 2007 and to 8,264,317 by 2015. The numbers are projected to reach 9,236,324 by 2019 (Ministry of Education and Sport [MoES], 2017). Although the increased enrolments were positively perceived with regard to increased access to education, the situation exacerbated the teacher: pupil ratio from the recommended 1:40 to classes of between 70- 150 learners (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2010) and with over-age pupils studying in most of the schools (Moyi, 2013). This increase in numbers has resulted in massive pressure on infrastructure, instructional materials and the demand for trained teachers. Across the African continent, as Adedeji & Olaniyan (2011) observe, this phenomenon has compromised the teaching-learning conditions with consequences like low pupil achievement, lack of proper infrastructure, untrained teachers and poor quality education.

It is clear that the increased pupil enrolments without an increase in the number of

¹ A commission chaired by E.B. Castle that sought to strengthen Uganda's education system in the interests of the country soon after Uganda gained independence in 1962. The main recommendations of the commission included the urgent need to increase access to education of the majority of citizens by introducing Universal Primary Education (UPE).



trained teachers, instructional materials and classrooms have impaired attempts to generate quality education in the Ugandan primary education sector. There are low levels of completion rates and as Mwesigye (2015) observes, at the national level average, only 22% of the UPE first time entrants in 1997 completed the primary school cycle in 2003. For pupils who enrolled in 2005, only 28% were able to complete primary seven. The World Bank (2014) in the National Education Profile Update of 2014 reveals that much as there is a high net enrolment rate in primary schools of 91%, the completion rate is as low as 53%. In the 2007 Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ²) test, “*nearly 20% of test takers in Uganda performed below the lowest performance benchmark in reading, compared to an average of 17% for other countries that took the same assessment*” (World Bank, 2014, p. 2) .

One of the neoliberal changes in the Ugandan education sector has been the government’s reduced expenditure on education. In 2012, the government spent 3.3% of the gross domestic product on education. A comparison with the East African regional countries shows that Rwanda and Burundi spent 4.8% and 6.1% respectively in 2011 and Kenya spent 6.7% in 2010 of their respective GDP on supporting the education sector. The Ugandan national expenditure thus, remains far below the UNESCO benchmark of 6%. The government’s contribution to the education sector budget as a proportion to the total national budget reduced from 20% in the 2007/08 financial year to 13.3% in the 2013/14 financial year (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development [MoFPED], 2013). This progressive reduction continued to 11.8% in the 2015/16 financial year and to 11.08% in the 2016/2017 financial year (MoES, 2017). Despite this reduction in spending, there is increased demand for primary education. As a result, government has responded to the increased demand by liberalising the education sector.

Uganda’s education sector has witnessed a number of policy shifts since the country gained her independence in 1962. First, shortly after independence, the government

² The SACMEQ is a Mathematics and reading English-based assessment aimed at ascertaining learners’ abilities. The assessments were conducted in Anglophone East African countries in the 1995, 2000 and 2007 years. The assessment is conducted among school pupils in formal education at the sixth grade.



formulated policies that aimed at transforming the education sector to focus on and address the needs of the indigenous Ugandan citizens. Prior to independence, education was inclined to the demands of the colonial government, and thus did not address the needs of the citizens. To that effect, the independent government convened the Castle Commission of 1962, which recommended the amalgamation of primary and junior secondary levels. It equally recommended the expansion of both secondary and teacher education. In turn, the junior level of education was stopped in preference to prolonging the primary level to eight years from the former six years and, finally, to seven years.

The Castle Commission guided Uganda's education system until 1987 when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) constituted the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) under the chairmanship of Professor William Senteza Kajubi. Its task was to look into the education sector and to make recommendations for improvement, especially after a decade of political and economic destabilisation. The commission and its recommendations led to the 1992 White Paper on Education, UPE and Universal Secondary Education (USE).

The Ugandan education system consists of the following levels: (i) pre-school level, commonly referred to as the nursery level, (ii) the primary school level, which lasts for seven years, (iii) the secondary school level, which lasts for six years with the first four years constituting the ordinary level and the last two years constituting the advanced level, and (iv) the post-secondary level of education which includes tertiary institutions that award diplomas and certificates, as well as universities that award degrees and postgraduate qualifications (MoES, 2013). In particular, the Ugandan primary education sector consists of seven years and the standard entry age is six years (Moyi, 2013). At the end of the seventh year, pupils sit for the national examinations, the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), which consists of four subjects: English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Academic achievement is determined by standardised scores (details in chapter five, section 5.3).

According to the MoES (2013), there are six categories of primary schools in Uganda. These categories are based on (i) ownership, (ii) founding bodies and funding sources, (iii) boarding status, (iv) location, (v) legal status and (vi) distance from the District



Education Office (DEO). In reality, this categorisation can pose an overlap, for example it is mandatory that all schools must be registered in order to operate, thus the category based on legal status may not exist in practice. A government or private school can also be a fully boarding, half boarding or day school. Thus, for the purposes of avoiding overlaps, as recommended by Mildmay Uganda Research and Ethics Committee (details in chapter three, section 3.4.1), one broad categorisation of ownership was adopted. The study, therefore, focused on (i) government-owned schools, (ii) church-owned schools and (iii) privately-owned schools. For each subcategory, a rural and urban school were purposively selected for the study. All the existing school categories are guided by the UPE policy with its vital stipulations in respect of quality education. Following this categorisation, the study aimed at ascertaining how the government has liberalised the education sector to increase access, but still attempts to maintain the education standards, creates avenues for private owners and holds schools accountable for whatever happens in the teaching-learning process, including the quality of primary education.

The policy in Uganda on the quality of primary education is enshrined in the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2007–2015 policy objectives (MoES, 2008, 2017), where the education policy objectives and quality education indicators such as pass rates, completion rates, availability of teaching materials and improved teaching-learning environment such as reduced teacher: pupil ratio and availability of sufficient classrooms are emphasised.

From both the Ugandan policy on quality education and the existing academic literature (as discussed in the literature review; chapter two), teachers' understanding of quality education and their classroom practices have been neglected in the attempt to define quality education. Attempts to define quality, especially by the statutory documents on education, concentrate on indicators such as pass rate, dropout rates, increased ability of the poor to raise their income, what the participants learn and how they learn (MoES, 2008). This has been driven by increased focus on market-dominated forces, with standardised scores being the main concern of quality. As Ross & Gibson (2006, p. 19) state, *"schools and teachers are provided with the goals they are to achieve but not explicitly directed in how they are to be achieved"*. The market forces take charge while at the same time, each school is held accountable for whatever performance it generates.



In view of the fact that teachers are the implementers of quality policies in schools and also because they assess pupils' performance, their understanding, value-loaded perceptions of quality education and how they implement such education in the classroom are of the utmost importance and, in fact, determine the type of education which pupils receive. It is because of this neglect that the need to conduct this study was borne, mainly to ascertain how the understanding and teachers' classroom practices affect the quality of primary education in Uganda. Accordingly, I endeavoured to interview primary school teachers and their head teachers, reviewed the existing documents and observed teachers' classroom practices in the six visited primary schools in Bushenyi district, Uganda.

1.2 Context of the study

The study was carried out from one of the districts in Uganda with both urban and rural characteristics. Specifically, it was conducted at six selected primary schools in Bushenyi district. Throughout the study and the writing up of the thesis, I concealed the schools' real names. Pseudonyms were instead adopted and the visited schools are referred to as Kent, Radox, Merit, Reality, Glad and Kids Cross primary schools. The district was purposively selected because, given the focus of the study, and the need to conduct classroom observations, it was important to select a district where the researcher understood the local language well. This was occasioned by the fact that classes from primary one to primary three are taught in the local language, while primary four pupils are instructed using a mixture of the local language and English. The selection of Bushenyi district, therefore, was guided by the fact that the researcher could easily understand the local language, making it easy to follow the lessons during the study's classroom observations. The selection of the district equally displayed certain characteristics that best suited the school categories in the Ugandan primary education sector. Generally speaking, a district with both rural and urban characteristics had to be selected, as detailed in section 3.5.1 of chapter three.

1.3 The study problem

The available literature reveals that there are various meanings of and approaches to the understanding of quality education. The approaches to defining quality education follow the line of events from the colonial era and the education setbacks of the postcolonial regime (Coloma, 2009; Crossley & Tikly, 2004; Tikly, 2001), with a



global shift towards free market enterprises, the withdrawal of the state from social services, including education, and with a greater focus on the accumulation of resources. The approaches to defining quality education, such as the human capital approach (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008), which emphasises increased schooling levels as a factor that can stimulate development, and the social justice approach (Tikly & Dachi, 2009), which focuses on eliminating constraints to participation and accessing social services, have stimulated a philosophical debate on the constructs of quality but have not come up with a harmonised understanding of quality education. With the emergence of neoliberal ideology in the education sector, the quality of education has been left to market forces.

Both the practical understanding and the policy definition of quality education in Uganda are derived from the technical meaning of standards as stipulated in the relevant policy documents and assessed on the basis of pupils' academic performance. The UPE policy, for example, focuses on increasing access to education, the provision of teaching-learning materials, gross and net enrolment rates, gender access, internal efficiency in the use of resources and primary survival rates (MoES, 2008, 2017; UWEZO, 2010, 2012). Clear assessment criteria are used to track these indicators. However, as UWEZO (2010) revealed, 98% of children in primary three were not able to read and understand a story text at primary two level, while 80% were not able to solve at least two numerical written division sums at primary two level. UWEZO (2016) affirms the presence of low learning outcomes at a national level, with only three out of ten pupils in primary three being able to read and understand an English story and do division. Coupled with the 73% primary school drop-out rate, the policy appears to be failing.

Teachers' understanding of quality and their classroom practices have been neglected in the attempt to define quality education. Yet, their classroom practices and understanding affect the way in which they teach. The neoliberal discourse requires teaching to take place in a way that meets the standards and best economic gains, with the aim of remaining competitive in the market. In view of the fact that teachers are the ones who assess academic performance in primary schools, their classroom practices and understanding of quality education are critical in the teaching-learning process. The question to answer then, is whether the poor quality education under the UPE policy



implementation is a result of either the fact that the classroom practices of teachers have been neglected or because teachers have various standpoints regarding their understanding and implementation of quality education. This unclear situation constituted a gap that the study intended to fill by ascertaining (i) how teachers perceive policies related to quality education in Uganda, (ii) how teachers practise quality education in classrooms in Uganda, and (iii) why teachers practise quality education in the ways they do?

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main research question

The main study question was: How do teachers understand and practise quality education in Ugandan primary education?

1.4.2 Specific research questions

This study was guided by the following specific research questions:

- How do teachers perceive policies related to quality education?
- How do teachers practise quality education in the classrooms?
- What, according to them, do they practise quality education in the ways they do?

1.5 Study rationale

In constituting the rationale of the study, I borrowed from Rojon & Saunders' (2012) position that one should aim at explaining why it is important to conduct the study given the already existing knowledge and implications for practice. It is hoped that this study will, on the basis of the empirical findings emerging from the examination of the understanding and classroom practices of teachers in a Ugandan primary school environment, succeed in redefining quality education as opposed to how it is currently defined in the existing national policy documents that guide the education sector. This is also hoped to refine the practice for improved quality education. Moreover, the available approaches in the existing literature, for example the human capital approach (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008), the social justice approach (Tikly & Dachi, 2009) and the free market discourse (Ross & Gibson, 2006), present a philosophical debate on the definition of quality education as they cannot be applied at the same time. To this effect, therefore, I hold that an understanding of quality education should determine how teachers can implement quality interventions, as their classroom practices and



perceptions are shaped by their overall understanding of what they should do as well as how they do it.

A recent evaluation conducted on the Ugandan UPE programme (Winsor Consult Rwanda Ltd and Measure Africa [U] Ltd, 2016, pp. 2–3) alludes to and confirms Murphy (2003) and Policy and Operations Evaluation Department's (IOB, 2008, 2003) earlier findings that *“the major challenge facing UPE in Uganda is the deteriorating quality of education mainly due to poor management practices, inadequate funding, low inputs especially teachers and teaching materials (for example, textbooks), overcrowded classrooms especially in lower primary and inadequate inspection/monitoring of teachers, the high rate of absenteeism/dropping out and the widespread practice of automatic promotion”*. No interest has been evinced in exploring whether teachers' understanding and classroom practices can explain the state of quality education in Uganda.

Further, existing research on the Ugandan education quality status, for example Kagoda (2012), Kisubi (2008) and Byamugisha & Ogawa (2010), has offered insights into the understanding of access to quality education and the strategies for its improvement. There is consensus that the Ugandan policy on education focuses primarily on increasing access to education, the provision of teaching-learning materials, gross and net enrolment rates, gender access and internal efficiency in the use of resources. However, there has not been any study that has attempted to establish how the classroom practices of teachers and their understanding of quality education affect the overall quality of primary education in Uganda, especially within the context of the neoliberalism reform agenda. Whereas the current policy portrays the need to access education, the actual practice depicts the provision of quality education to only those who can afford to go to better schools. This has been a result of government withdrawal from education provision and, at the same time, private players' ability to provide alternatives with a profit maximisation objective based on emphasising reduced inefficiencies and increased accountability requirements. It is, thus, expected that this study's findings will inform and help in the formulation of appropriate policies that may integrate teachers' understanding of quality education and their classroom practices in the national education policy. This will help harmonise education policy and practice.



1.6 Relevance of the study

This study makes a contribution to the debate and existing knowledge in the area of quality primary education, especially regarding teachers' understanding and classroom practices in shaping and directing the quality of education that a learner receives. The study opens and sheds light on the current quality education discourse and shows how the current quality education crisis in Ugandan primary education is a manifestation of the global neoliberal reform agenda. In 1997, the government started the UPE programme aimed at increasing access to education services to the majority of citizens. This was followed by the liberalisation of the education sector thus leading to an increase in the number of private education service providers. Accordingly, the government has continuously reduced expenditure on education, a move that has exacerbated the teaching-learning conditions in government-aided schools. On the other hand, this has provided private school managers with a competitive edge in terms of which the well-stocked schools attract greater numbers and make increased profits. The government has maintained its central role in setting education standards mainly by setting the primary school curriculum and assessing learners based on standardised scores on which individual schools are held accountable to the public. Although the government's role in setting standards is commendable for the purposes of uniformity in teaching and learning outcomes, remarkable differences have been noted in implementation. Private schools operate in a different environment where they have come up with their own teaching modalities. For example, the thematic curriculum is not followed effectively (Mwesigye, 2015). The only standards that drive the Ugandan primary education sector are the final grades learners attain at the end of primary seven. This has led to teaching being focused on the examinable areas. Learners are trained in a manner that can help them attain the best grades, hence the essence of holistic teaching that greatly shapes the quality of education is currently non-existent in Ugandan primary schools.

This study makes a contribution by revealing how impractical government policy intentions can be achieved without engaging the implementers in the design process. The study findings point to the fact that teachers have a wider understanding of quality education. They understand quality education from various perspectives such as holistic training, planning for the child to become a responsible citizen in the future, tolerance, empowerment, good service provided to pupils and so forth. However, what they



practise in the classroom is different. Teachers' practice takes place within the framework of the national curriculum and the assessment standards, which are centrally designed without consulting them. Teachers' understanding of quality education have been neglected in the centralised framework for setting performance standards, and this has led to conflict between the ideal understanding and the practice in the classroom. There is no uniformity in teaching practice, with some policies such as automatic promotions and the use of local languages being followed only in government-aided schools. The failure to consult teachers in designing policies that affect the work they do every day has resulted in a lack of policy awareness and intentions, a lack of ownership and poor implementation support. For this reason and informed by the findings, the current study proposes a model; Teacher Inclusion in Quality Education Discourse (TIQED), which may help to incorporate teachers' understanding, their lived experiences and classroom practices in setting education policies, in classroom instruction and in the entire discourse on generating quality education with regard to the primary education sector.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised and structured under three main parts with seven chapters. The first part gives the background to the study and a review of the scholarly literature. It consists of chapter one and two. The second part articulates the philosophy, approach and the methods that were employed and contains chapter three. The third part contains the findings, conclusions and recommendations and contains chapters four, five, six and seven. Specifically, the content of each chapter is discussed as follows:

Chapter one. This is an introductory chapter that foregrounds the study and locates it in the existing global neoliberal education movements and aligns the practice to the context-specific realities in the Ugandan environment. The chapter contains the study problem and rationale based on the existing research findings, articulates the research questions that guided the study, as well as setting the foundation for the approaches and methods that were used to generate, analyse and interpret the data.

Chapter two: This chapter contains a presentation of a review of the literature. It presents a synthesis of literature on the constructs of quality education in terms of three themes: The first theme relates to quality education as national development and



presents literature on the meaning of national development, the linkage between quality education and national development and the limitation of quality education in stimulating national development. The second theme is quality education as standards. It presents literature which elucidates the meaning of standards, the dimensions of standards in education and the challenge posed by quality education as standards. The third theme relates to quality education as accountability. The presentation of the literature on this theme focuses on the meaning of accountability in education, forms of accountability in the education sector and the implications of accountability in the education sector, especially given the current neoliberalism discourse. The chapter also contains the conceptual framework which illustrates the relationship between the different variables that guided the study. The literature presented constantly reflects on the current influence of the neoliberalism reform agenda in the education sector.

Chapter three: This chapter discusses the approach taken in this study. The chapter locates the study in the epistemological research philosophy, that helped determine the research approach (qualitative approach), the interpretivist paradigm and a case study design owing to the nature of the research questions which were how and why questions.. The chapter also articulates the detailed methods and tools applied, as well as the entire process that was followed to generate the data and the methods of analysis.

Chapter four: In this chapter, the findings on the construct of quality education as national development are presented. The chapter is organised in line with what the participants perceived to be quality education with regard to national development enlisted in the existing policies, how they practised quality education and why they practised quality education in the ways they did in the perspective of quality education as national development. The findings are discussed based on the existing scholarly literature as well as policy reflections.

Chapter five: The chapter presents findings on the construct of quality education as standards. Accordingly, participants' views are given on the understanding of quality education as standards, how they were practising quality education in their respective classrooms and why they were practising quality education in the ways they did with respect to standards. The presentation of findings in this chapter is enhanced by a discussion in light of the existing literature.



Chapter Six: The chapter presents the data on quality education as accountability. It focuses on participants' understanding of quality education in an accountability framework, focusing on a school environment, how teachers were practising quality education in their respective classrooms with regard to accountability and why they were practising quality education in such ways. The generated views are discussed concurrently while cross referencing them with the literature on accountability, especially in an educational environment.

Chapter Seven: This constitutes the final chapter of the thesis and contains a summary of the findings in terms of the study purpose, methodology and the three themes (quality education as national development, quality education as standards and quality education as accountability) that guided the study. In summarising the findings, the three research questions that guided the study are reflected on, namely: (i) How do teachers perceive policies related to quality education in Uganda? (ii) How do teachers practise quality education in classrooms in Uganda? and (iii) Why do teachers practise quality education in the ways they do. In addition, critical to chapter seven is the articulation of the contribution and implications of the study findings to the existing body of knowledge and the initially held position in the conceptual framework. Emerging from the findings, conclusions and recommendations are made. The chapter also presents suggested areas from which future research can be conducted.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a review of the existing literature on the concept of quality with regard to primary education. The literature is drawn from academic writings, policy documents and briefs. There exists a good deal of literature on the concept of quality in different fields and practice. Having gone through a number of write-ups, especially recent publications on current global education trends, I synthesised the commonly occurring ideas related to quality education into three constructs of quality education, namely: quality as national development, quality as standards and quality as accountability. There is a linkage here in that education is greatly influenced by global and national development goals. Standards are, therefore, set to measure the extent to which goals are achieved based on taking stock of individual and institutional actions towards the realisation of such goals, manifested in the current accountability function in the education sector.

The presentation and flow of the literature are based on the fact that the current neoliberalist thinking in education has affected national policies on education and practice and, therefore, the understanding and generation of quality education in the classrooms. The neoliberalist discourse requires free market enterprise in the belief that development and social transformation can be driven by an environment that is conducive for private enterprises and less state intervention, but with systems that ensure there are set standards that should be realised. In the education sector, as Hutchings (2015) argues, focus is placed on producing an ideologically compliant workforce that can help in the accumulation of profits, through a structure in which performativity and standardised ways of doing things are the norm of practice. Individual schools are held accountable by their results (Hossain, 2017; Hutches, 2015; Salto, 2017) and efficiency is rewarded by the accumulation of profits. Because the state sets the performance standards which schools must meet in order to attract more buyers who seek education services, teachers' understanding and classroom practices have been influenced by such standards and accountability procedures. This has in turn affected the overall quality of education.



2.2 Quality education as national development

Under this theme, I first present literature on the general understanding of national development before presenting literature on how quality education can stimulate development. Thereafter, I present literature on the limitations of quality education in stimulating national development.

2.2.1 Meaning of national development

Development is a complex and multidimensional concept that has a number of definitions, models and theories (Kates, Parris & Leiserowitz, 2008). To this effect, the definitions alluded to here are those that have a link with the essence of education generally, especially how education contributes to national development and how national development can in turn affect the quality of education. Quoting Chrisman (1984), Luwal & Oluwatoyin (2011) put it that development is an improvement in all conditions of human existence. It is a process that is characterised by social advancement in which the citizens' wellbeing is constantly improved through the efforts of various stakeholders, such as the government, education institutions, corporate institutions, civil society organisations and other groups in society. A nation's development is, thus, delivered out of strong partnerships, and is not purely economic in nature but also addresses social, political and governance aspects of human life.

Todaro & Smith (2009) give a broader understanding of development as a transformation of unsatisfactory conditions in society towards a better state of human life characterised by accelerated economic growth and a reduction in inequalities and social problems such as poverty and unemployment. They identify three facets of development: (i) sustenance, (ii) self-esteem and (iii) freedom. Sustenance refers to one's ability to meet the basic needs of life. The rationale of national development in this regard should be to enable people fulfil their basic needs. Self-esteem refers to one's worth, honour and dignity and not allowing oneself to be used for the benefit of others. Human beings ought not to be used as mere tools in the development process. Lastly, freedom connotes one's ability to choose. This encompasses political economics as well as freedom from social vassalage. Any transformational endeavour devoid of these three foundations requires reorientation to fit within the national development framework.



Earlier on, Thomas (2000) provided an understanding of development by describing the processes it goes through. He argued that it is visionary, in that it points out the desired state, and historical, for it goes through certain processes over time. In addition, it requires actions in which resources are expended to bring about change. It is this need for positive change that has compelled global and national efforts to come up with national development plans to guide country-specific development paths. According to Luwal & Oluwatoyin (2011), a country is categorised as developed when it can provide quality of life to her populace and is able to address issues of poverty, starvation and unemployment. This definition points out three critical strands in the development agenda: (i) that development is a broad concept and must yield to improvements in all facets of human life, covering plans, resources and skills acquisition, and physical, social, technological, political and environmental advancements; (ii) that development is not all about the numbers but the satisfaction and attached value people hold because of their existence and living in a given context, and (iii) development is concerned with equality and access. A country with a high growth development product, with resources concentrated in the hands of a few, poses a threat to the majority citizens whose life and means of survival are not planned for by the government programmes.

Going by these definitions, it is critical to realise that in order for a country to develop sustainably, the individuals' capabilities and functionings must be developed, which reckons with the need for education generally. Still, meaningful and well-planned strategies must be put in place, together with resources to implement the strategies (Awhen, Timipre, & Agyngwuye, 2014; Hunt, 2013). The definitions suggest that development is good as it is greatly associated with improved human welfare. However, this may not always be the case, as perspectives from the postmodernism school of thought regard development as something that governments and development agencies use to maintain power and control over others. This study takes cognisance of the different perspectives on development and how each can affect the life of the common man and the implications they hold for the generation of quality education. The Hub Cymru Africa (2018) provides a summary of the different perspectives and their views on development as indicated in Table 2.1.



Table 2.1: Views on development perspectives

Perspective	Views of development
Neoliberalism	Neoliberalists look at development as a capitalist perspective that perceives and considers no need for any development action except to have free markets. The argument heightened in this perspective is that the resulting perpetual economic growth will ‘trickle down’ and so, every citizen benefits in the long run. To the neoliberals, history is seen as the result of individual rational actions.
Structuralism	The state is in control and it is argued that history comes out as a result of political and economic struggles. Development in this perspective is considered to be the state’s responsibility with aim to create a modern industrial society.
Interventionism	This perspective holds that there are both losers and winners in capitalist progress and that development actions try to help the losers. More recently, concern for the negative effects of capitalist growth on the environment has been considered. In some cases interventions involve eliminating the constraints to modernisation and in other cases, interventions aim to influence the direction of the targeted change.
People centred/alternatives	This is based on the belief that all humans can reach their full potential. It is upheld that development involves attempts to empower individuals and groups of individuals to make their own self-initiated choices. It is believed in the people centred perspective that individuals and social movements are the agents of change.
Post development	This perspective argues that development is not a good thing; in this view development agencies and governments use ‘doing good’ as an excuse to maintain power and control.

Source: Adopted from Hub Cymru Africa (2018)

The development perspectives displayed in the Table 2.1 all agree on the outcome of the development process; a structural transformation that involves a shift from a poor state to a better one. However, there are significant variations in the process of stimulating national development. For example, whilst the structuralists emphasise government control of the development process, neoliberals argue that for development to take



place, the only precondition is the operation of free markets and, through those who can produce goods and services, the benefits will definitely trickle down to the majority citizens. This is in total disagreement with the interventionists and people-centred theorists, who value the contribution of the disadvantaged people in society.

The argument in the literature presented is based on the neoliberalist approach in which its features in the education sector include, among others, the liberalisation of the education sector, reduced government expenditure on education (Maistry, 2014; Rustin, 2016), emphasis on standardised scores and holding institutions accountable for the education outcomes (Giroux, 2015; Hutchings, 2015; Sims, 2017). As the presentation unfolds, the discussion takes note of the fact that reliance on neoliberalism creates social inequalities and those who benefit from the free markets use the good they have created to retain their power and control.

2.2.2 The linkage between quality education and national development

The linkage between quality education and national development is presented according to five sub-areas: (i) the purpose of education and national development, (ii) quality education as a tool for stimulating economic growth and poverty reduction, (iii) quality education and the acquisition of skills critical to national development, (iv) quality education and its ability to strengthen partnerships for sustainable development, and (v) quality education, human rights and good governance. The available literature tends to link quality education to national development from a human capital perspective, which the presentation recognises but tempers with the neoliberalist argument as emerging from the existing phenomenon in the current Ugandan education sector practices.

Education purpose and national development

Education aims at the acquisition of skills relevant to national development (OECD, 2017). Hamidi, Ghorbandorrdijab, Rezaee & Jafari (2010) highlight the need for developing countries to purposely invest in information technology-based education to acquire the skills necessary to increase the pace of modern development. In the developed countries, education has for long been considered as a pivot for stimulating development. From the 1970s to the present, policies and foreign aid has been directed at increased access to education as a cornerstone for development efforts (Riddell & Niño-Zarazua, 2015). This has been done by enhancing supply-driven policies such as



school construction and the provision of instructional materials and equipment, especially in secondary and tertiary institutions. In the late 1980s, however, the global focus changed to primary education, considering it more of a stimulant for national development with high economic returns in developing countries (Asiedu & Nandwa, 2007).

Attempts to define quality education broadly link it to the way in which it may stimulate national development as a result of the investment in human capital. According to Ndofirepi (2013), 21st century philosophers have, in the quest for national development, continued to ask questions like: What is the aim of education? Why do we send children to school and how should we teach the younger generation? Attaining national development requires providing answers to these questions. Thus, the national planning agenda must recognise and link educational planning inputs to the way in which they can be relevant to learners and can help meet national goals.

Research on the concept of quality education, such as Barratt et al. (2006) and Hanushek & Woessmann (2008), not only emphasises the transmission of knowledge to learners but also the extent to which learners may utilise what they have learnt to contribute towards national development. This is greatly determined by the reason as to why education is provided. This presupposes that quality education should equip learners with the ability to provide an input, especially in the form of labour to foster the development of skills, such as production and the accumulation of resources for self-survival. This achievement rests in the hands of the classroom teacher. In Uganda, however, as Twebaze (2015) observes, the quality UPE has been deteriorating mainly due to teachers' low devotion brought by the surging enrolment numbers and the increased focus on profit maximisation by school owners. Teachers' practices and understanding of quality have been neglected in the attempt to generate quality education. The focus has instead been placed on quality indicators such as pass rates, dropout rates, increased ability of the poor to raise their income and what pupils learn generally (MoES, 2008).

The constructs of quality education and what defines education emanate from the reason why nations invest in education. New trends in education emphasise the shaping of the human quality that reinforces economic growth and development (Byamugisha &



Ogawa, 2010), as well as the accumulation of individual wealth. More specifically, schools will always align their goals in such a way that they contribute to the national goals. With the accumulation of wealth as a focus, schools aim at improving the standards of achievement, and ensuring that children are able to compete globally (Akareem & Hossain, 2016).

Accordingly, education is seen as a tool that stimulates social transformation and development (Awhen et al., 2014). But to achieve this, national policies must address education quality bottlenecks. National education goals must be articulated in national policies in a manner that attracts government support. This idea is in line with Hunt (2013), who observed that there is a need to strategically position primary education quality in specific national policy documents if education is to constitute a foundation for national development. However, in considering the Education Strategic Plan 2010–2015 (MoES, 2010, 2017), as Hunt (2013) points out, the major strategy articulated for improving quality education is the use of local language instruction in pre-primary education and lower primary classes. Yet this impedes the pupils' performance at primary seven level when they are assessed in English. Still, with the liberalisation of the education sector and the continued reduction in government expenditure on education, the national planning processes and outputs cannot be a solution to education quality bottlenecks in Uganda.

The current policy direction in Uganda, articulated in Vision 2040, emphasises the development of her human capital as the primary tool for stimulating and accelerating the transformation process that can lead to development (The Republic of Uganda, 2015) because of its factor productivity. The national need for a firm human capital base directs national efforts in the education sector. It is thus critical that in understanding what constitutes quality education, the reason why nations invest in education, as well as the environment in which teaching and learning take place, should be examined. This requires a structure that strategically positions the aims of education away from the global agenda to the specific classroom environments. Even though the Ugandan government has adopted neoliberal practices in education by focusing on increased access to education, little has been done to ensure that quality transcends the passing of standardised tests and exams. Instead, the government has consistently



reduced its funding on education (MoFPED, 2013). The attainment of quality education in resource-constrained environments remains mystical (McGrath, 2010).

Nevertheless, as Tarabini (2010) and McGrath (2010) put it, education should be addressed as a human right and its quality must be planned for (Christie, 2010) if it is to stimulate national development. In the development research and development agenda, much emphasis has been placed on highlighting the economic value of education, especially by the World Bank, without putting in place preconditions that would address resource constraints especially in developing countries. With constrained resources, teachers focus on how pupils can pass the exams per se. Thus, if an understanding of the implementation process is lacking, governments may not achieve the overall target of education. This, therefore, brings to the fore the teachers' understanding and classroom practices in the general understanding of quality education together with the preconditions for attaining quality education.

Education as a tool for fostering economic growth and reducing poverty

Nowak & Dahal (2016) argue that education plays an instrumental role in poverty reduction due to its capacity to increase gender empowerment, environmental protection awareness and health promotion as well as enhancing human capital, all critical to productivity and economic growth. These writers succinctly argue that education has been theoretically and scientifically proven to be a tool in reducing poverty, creating diverse chances for participation in the labour market, economic growth and, ultimately, socio-economic development.

Much literature attests to the role of education in social transformation. First, education reduces poverty by increasing national productivity (Afzal, Malik, Begum, Sarwar, & Fatima, 2012). A similar idea has been advanced by Jacob & Ludwig (2009), who discuss the fact that the only best way to avoid poverty in future is by getting quality education. Reflecting on the economic argument, Jacob & Ludwig (2009) argue that the schooling process makes people more productive and productivity is an input to wage determination. With increased wages, the national revenue base as well as the citizens' purchasing power increase, which ultimately contributes to national growth.



Further, in a study conducted to ascertain the contribution of education to economic growth in Nepal, Nowak & Dahal (2016) found out that a 1% change in primary education would lead to a 39.17% increase in GDP. Nowak & Dahal's (2016) findings agree with Kim & Terada-Hagiwara's (2010) earlier observation that education helps increase the adoption and diffusion of new technologies that are critical to development. Lack of trained human capital has been linked to low levels of development (Adawo, 2011). The failure to exploit the existing natural resources, as Todaro and Smith (2015) argue, is linked to lack of skilled manpower, characterised by poor management of capital, human resources and modern technology.

In analysing the relationship between education and economic growth, Afzal et al. (2012) noted that countries need to invest in education if they are to develop. This is linked to education's capacity to reduce poverty levels through increased human productivity. In Bangladesh and India, poor people are increasingly employing education as a strategy to improve the household's poverty levels. Poor parents are increasingly sending their children to privately run, fee-paying schools in the belief that the quality of education is better in privately run schools than state-owned and managed schools (Death et al., 2015).

Globally, there is evidence that the quality of education has a direct effect on employment levels in a country and the development thereof. According to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2016), people with higher qualifications have higher chances of being employed first compared to low educated ones, due to the human capital value placed on the former category. While there are prospects for the low educated citizens, there are glaring challenges that constrain them from being absorbed in the labour market. This has led to high numbers of cases of unemployed human capital. Across the OECD countries, the unemployment rate stands at "12.4% for adults with below upper secondary education, while it is 4.9% for the tertiary-educated" (OECD, 2016, p. 90).

Awan, Malik, Sarwar & Waqas (2011) acknowledge that poverty is a constraint to economic development, arguing that programmes like Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) use education to reduce poverty. Drawing inferences from Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) data in Pakistan, Awan



et al. (2011) found that education achievement and experience are negatively related to the incidences of poverty. It was equally observed that higher levels of educational achievement reduce one's chances of being poor, though the chances of males retaining a position above the poverty level were greater than their female counterparts.

In recognising the contribution of education to reducing poverty levels, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2011, p. 2) states:

“Education raises individual incomes. In virtually all countries, workers who have gone through more years of schooling earn more. Over time, the increase in income leads to significantly higher standards of living and greater opportunities. Every additional year of schooling has been estimated to increase income per worker by 8.3 percent, on average”.

This quote clearly articulates that with improved educational attainment of the citizens, the country stands a greater chance of reducing poverty since the educated stand a better chance of obtaining formal employment than their counterparts who have never been to school.

Using research findings from the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (UNESCO, 2016) and the 2016 Learning Generation Report (Education Commission, 2016), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) (2016) articulates five ways in which education increases individual earnings and economic growth, thereby contributing to national development. These five ways are presented in Table 2.2.



Table 2.2: Summary of arguments on how education can reduce poverty

Potential for quality education	Argument advanced on a global basis
Reduction in poverty levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is projected that if all children in schools left with basic reading skills, 171 million would be helped to get out of extreme poverty. - With improved learning, absolute poverty could be reduced by 30%.
Increases in individual earnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is an increase in earnings for a 1 US dollar invested in additional year of education by 5 US dollars and 2.5 US dollars in low income and middle level income countries respectively. - For each additional year in school, education improves earnings by about 10%.
Tool for reducing economic inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The disparity in working poverty between employees from rich and poor backgrounds would reduce by 39% if they all received the same quality of education.
Promotion of economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the period 1965 and 2010, 50% of the variations in growth rates between Asia and Sub-Saharan African countries may be explained by educational attainment. - In sub-Saharan African countries, an average increase in tertiary educational attainment by a year would lead to a long-term increase in GDP of 16%.
Education helps save the planet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is projected that as many as 122 million people globally will be cast into poverty by 2030 as a result of unfavourable climatic changes and the associated increase in natural disasters and reduced agricultural productivity. - Highly educated workers with quality skills create an opportunity for the creation of green industries. - With 33.3% of gas emissions coming from the agricultural sector, it is only quality education at primary and secondary levels that can help provide farmers with the required knowledge on sustainable agricultural practices.

Source: Adopted from the Global Partnership for Education (2016)

Although there is evidence that education can contribute to economic growth and reduce poverty levels, the argument assumes an environment in which the quality of education provided is the same and learners have equal and similar opportunities of using the acquired skills to contribute to growth and earn some income. I argue that with the operation of the free markets under the neoliberal movement, education is prone to create more disparities. Bray (2009) articulates the fact that due to the market forces driving the education sector, children from poor families continue to attend low-quality schools while rich parents are able to send their children to the best and most reputable schools and are able to pay for their children to attend extra tutorial classes after normal



teaching hours. This translates to disparities in overall academic achievement. The Ugandan situation is no different. Children from well-to-do families attend private schools that offer better quality education. This way, the argument that education increases human productivity levels does not hold under the neoliberal reform agenda because the set standards that are used to measure learners' levels of achievement disadvantage some pupils, especially those from poor families. By implication, their productivity will be low compared to their counterparts from well-to-do families. The principle of rewarding efficiency and effectiveness enshrined in the neoliberalism reform movement, specifically in the education sector, is consequently another hindrance to the reduction of poverty and an increase in economic growth.

Education and the acquisition of knowledge and skills critical to national development

Globally, as Obasi (2010) emphasises, all nations owe their development trends and levels to the quality of education their citizens receive (USAID, 2011). Global initiatives are now focused on the development of quality skills (OECD, 2017) as a starting point for stimulating indigenous development. For example, the World Bank (2014) emphasises the acquisition of diverse skill sets to stimulate sustainable development, because the acquisition of such skills is capable of creating employment opportunities across all levels of society, thus contributing to economic growth. In terms of the capabilities enhancement approach (UNESCO, 2007), which aims at the creation of better skilled and responsive individuals to pursue development goals, the quality of primary education has become a catalyst for development in developing countries (Riddell & Niño-Zarazú, 2015). Consequently, primary education is currently taking a large amount of development aid, especially with the EFA movement and the Millennium Development Goals (UNESCO, 2011, 2014).

As Kulshrestha & Pandey (2013) put it, quality education aims to inculcate the ability in people to meet life's needs. This takes place within a transitional framework that aims at changing people so as to enable them to contribute towards national development by gaining skills to enhance their ability to become competitive, rational, capable, responsive and intelligent. Given the dynamic adaptability challenges of the 21st century (characterised by multiculturalism, globalisation and the destabilisation of



family systems), it is essential that quality education prepares learners to understand the turbulences of social realities and to develop cognitive qualities such as tolerance and understanding of people from different backgrounds. This, as one of the components of quality education, is what Harvey (2009) refers to as empowering agency. This empowering agency is critical to sustainable development as it widens the resource base of human capital. Thus, in accordance with the notion of empowering agency, I directed the study focus to the nature of education that transforms and empowers citizens to enhance national productivity. The quest for quality education in that regard becomes pivotal.

The relationship between education and national development is not new (see Leftwich, 1982). It is an idea that resonates with Tarabini (2010) and McGrath (2010), who articulate the argument that education is a stimulant for the acquisition of skills necessary for development. Hanushek & Woessmann (2008) stress the fact that there is a direct positive relationship between the population's skills and the country's growth trends. A population's knowledge capital and cognitive skills will always direct the country's growth and development. This idea postulates that skilled human capital contributes directly to the production function, while simultaneously reducing possibilities for engaging in crime. Thom-otuya & Inko-tariah (2016) equally agree in principle that education is an indisputable instrument for national development as it produces professionals and support skills that stimulate national development.

While this study recognises the linkage between productive wealth in the form of skills acquired through education and national development, the constraints to the human capital approach are also examined, especially given the current neoliberal approach that has revolutionised the education sector. For example, the assumption that human beings behave in a rational manner and will make an invest in education so long as the perceived and ascertained marginal benefits are greater or equal to the marginal costs, is not a practical one. This presupposes that human beings can, with ease, ascertain the future returns on education as an investment. In addition, given the current neoliberal principles in the education sector, characterised by free market enterprises, only those who can obtain employment after the education cycle can benefit from education as an investment. As Tan (2014) observes, schooling may postulate higher productivity without necessarily causing it in practice. This is apparently the case with the



standardised scores in the examination regime that determine pupils' learning achievement. There is no relationship between education and higher productivity (Mankiw, Gans, King, & Stonecash, 2012), especially if those who are educated are not absorbed into the competitive labour market.

Given the current digital business environment, a well-educated labour force (Kim & Terada-Hagiwara, 2010) is critical for stimulating modern national development. As Adiq (2011) argues, institutional operations are greatly influenced by the quality of education, streamlining working conditions, governance and the labour force. It is critical to realise, therefore, that if nations are to develop, there is a need to invest in the quality of education.

In Nigeria, in a study that aimed at understanding how improved education standards relate to national development, Awhen et al. (2014) emphasise the importance of quality education and the acquisition of skills at all levels of education as the foundation for the political, economic, social and technological transformation needed to drive the national development goals to completion. They recommend a curriculum overhaul that would champion the acquisition of practical skills, the provision of the necessary infrastructure and commitment from government to support education interventions financially. A similar idea had earlier been raised by Ogunwuyi (2010) in which quality education was regarded as an eventual value and once integrated with the provision of social services, it becomes a conduit for social transformation and development. The value of education emanates from its capacity to enhance the development of an individual (Edinyang, Ubi & Adalikwu, 2012) who will, in turn, contribute towards economic growth and development.

Due the prevalence of a strong linkage between the quality of education and national development, nations focus their education reform agendas on the development of graduates who can contribute to national development. For example, in Sweden and the Netherlands, primary school education focuses on the key role of child-centred teaching and learning philosophies, as well as the usefulness of education in shaping the learners to take their future place in society and their ongoing contribution to the ever-changing economy (Shuayb & O'Donnell, 2008). In Scotland, a Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004) (for all pupils from the age of 3 to 18 years) was developed



with a primary focus on transforming pupils into successful learners who would evolve into skilled, confident, responsible citizens, capable of contributing to national development.

In Uganda, the Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (UNCDC) (2018) articulates that the aim of the national curriculum for primary education is to enable learners to develop competencies and skills for lifelong learning. It is critical to note that if we are to relate quality education to development, education should in essence encompass the development of capabilities and the utilisation of skills acquired to foster growth that can contribute to development. However, this requires policy reforms to strengthen the capacity and relevancy of training. Given the current state of education in Uganda, where the private sector constitutes the majority of education service providers, there is no uniformity in regulating the conduct of training. This poses a serious threat to the generation of quality education for providing citizens with skills that are critical to national development. Nevertheless, as discussed in section 2.3.3, there is sufficient evidence to show that the acquisition of skills does not guarantee economic growth and national development. As this study argues, the linkage between the human capital principles and neoliberalism reform agenda in education is a contradictory one. The increased focus of the neoliberalist approach on conforming to standards stifles the creativity that would have increased productivity under the human capital approach.

Strengthening partnerships between schools and the communities

Quality education that is holistic in nature is a conduit for promoting social relationships (Orji & Job, 2013). Through the schooling system, learners interact with people from different backgrounds and cultures, which helps create a sense of mutual coexistence, understanding, empathy and tolerance. The social groupings at different schools orient learners to appreciating the need to survive in a multicultural environment, which is characteristic of the current dynamic engagement in the global economy. This way, education provides a strong conduit for development.

On the other hand, Laurie, Nanoyama-Tarumi, Mckeown & Hopkins (2016) go beyond the internal school interfaces and call for the effective management of relationships between schools and communities, which is critical to sustainable development. These



writers argue that when learners are given opportunities to interact with their communities, they understand community issues, which as a result, provides the communities with a chance to invest better in interventions that can address their problems. Community members will also better support interventions whose intentions they understand rather than the traditional top-down interventions. This increases the chances for intervening in sustainability concerns through enhanced community ownership.

In a study conducted to understand the type of policy interventions that improve the quality of education in the developing countries (with focus put on Africa, Asia, Latin America, Korea, Latvia and Middle East), it was observed that education policies and interventions become highly effective with regard to improving student performance and the associated learning especially when social norms and progressive citizen choices are considered in the entire design of education policies (Masino & Niño-Zarazú, 2015). Using three supply-side interventions (infrastructure and learning resources, incentives and participation), it was observed that a combination of the change drivers was necessary to stimulate positive results. It was concluded that addressing education from the supply side was less effective and would only improve performance when combined with the community participation or the provision of incentives that would change preferences and behaviours. This suggests the need to incorporate school stakeholders in the education content, together with education innovations that increase community ownership. This is a strong foundation for policy and programme sustainability.

Laurie et al. (2016) highlight the need for development that is sustainable by tailoring education curricula to the sustainability needs of the country. In a study conducted to ascertain the contribution of Education for Sustainable Development in 18 countries Laurie et al. (2016) found that education for sustainable development significantly improved the quality of education across both primary and secondary education when the taught curriculum articulated sustainability content. Results were found to be even higher when education for sustainable development pedagogical strategies were included in the curriculum. Significant improvements in critical thinking skills and deeper understanding were found in schools in Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, Australia, China, Canada, Peru, Scotland, Finland, Estonia, England, Belgium,



Mongolia and Peru. Communication, writing and mathematical skills were noted in Finland, Germany and Scotland, whereas Korean schools excelled in acquiring problem-solving skills. Estonian schools, on the other hand, excelled in producing students ready to form and defend their opinions, while in Latvia students exhibited readiness for the job market.

As Ball (2015) emphasises the need for engaging actors in designing and implementing policies, arguing that actors in education shape and determine the extent to which education outcomes can be generated and utilised to direct national development. These actors include the entire education system, institutions and service providers in the education sector such as the government, teachers, political leaders and parents. The way they respond during the process of shaping the human capital, and how they provide opportunities for the trained human capital to provide a service, directly affects the utilisation of skills and accumulation of wealth that contribute to national development.

Quality education, human rights and good governance

Quality education plays an instrumental role in the realisation, promotion and protection of human rights and the good governance that is critical to a nation's development level. In the first instance, quality education is a natural human entitlement and should never be taken for granted (Christie, 2010). Through education, citizens are able to demand their human rights and the quality services that heighten the pace of national development.

On the good governance front, Fontana (2017) provides four circumstances under which education leads to good governance: (i) Promoting the emergence of leaders, as electorates cherish educational attainment in their leaders. (ii) Providing avenues for leaders to emerge from the traditionally marginalised groups. Though this may be common in after periods of war and among refugee populations, education empowers people from marginalised groups to contest for leadership positions. (iii) Providing skilled civil servants capable of implementing government development interventions. (iv) The emergence of an educated middle class capable of holding leaders accountable and shaping the direction of service delivery in the country. Although Fontana (2017) used the case of higher education in arguing out this case, it should be noted that the



primary school level is a foundation for all other higher levels and, thus, his observation may provide a basis for understanding how quality primary education can lead to good governance in the long run.

According to Dei (2014), quality education is a major input to good governance much as good governance in turn affects the quality of education. Using the tenets of good governance: accountability, participation, equity, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus oriented, effectiveness and efficiency. Dei (2014) argues that these can become a reality when citizens receive the best quality education to enhance their productivity function as fair, just and responsible citizens.

Tikly & Barrett (2010) propose a social justice framework which is based on the three dimensions of a good quality education, namely: (a) inclusion, (b) relevance and (c) democracy. Inclusion relates to the way in which various groups of learners may access the quality inputs that may, in turn, enhance the development of their individual capabilities, overcome the cultural and institutional constraints that affect the learning of various groups and establish avenues for eliminating such constraints. Relevance, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the educational outcomes are relevant to the learners, are valued by their communities and are in harmony with the national development priorities in a rather turbulent global environment. Lastly, democracy addresses the way in which educational stakeholders become engaged in the entire educational process at all levels of governance. While this idea provides a framework for understanding quality education in relation to national development, it does not explain how teachers' understanding and classroom practices affect the entire teaching-learning process and ultimately quality of education.

Despite the need to embrace a social justice framework in education, Tikly & Barrett (2013) observe that concerns of democracy, inclusion and relevancy are not given attention especially in the Global South, as teachers' levels of motivation keep on reducing. These teachers teach under poor conditions, characterised by large classes, lack of sufficient instructional materials and poor classroom structures and they lack the skills to match the requirements of the ever-changing curriculum which places great demands on them.



According to UNESCO (2013), education is a tool that can foster global citizenship, as it has the power to shape a sustainable future and a better world. It is argued that education should go beyond literacy and numeracy by preparing children for the future job market. This addresses the pertinent issue of helping people realise sustainable mechanisms for forging more peaceful, tolerant and just societies.

Education has political linkages, especially when it comes to policy formulation. Using the Bangladesh and Ghana as examples, Death et al. (2015) note that though political manifestos heighten the need for increased access to education, none focuses on the quality aspect of education. These authors realise that in the absence of concern for quality education, parents are likely to continue spending money to educate their children at private schools where the quality is thought to be at its best. I, therefore, posit that the failure to incorporate education quality parameters in national policies poses a threat to the realisation of quality education, since the failure to champion quality will imply a lack of government commitment to the realisation of the same. As Death et al. (2015) acknowledge, there is a need for an enhanced political will to increase access to quality education through adequate funding.

Uganda has similar concerns to those of Bangladesh and Ghana. At the outset of UPE in Uganda in 2005, the government employed a policy of automatic promotion from one class to another (Okurut, 2015) for the purposes of completing the primary education cycle as well as achieving the Education For All (EFA) goals, especially goal two, five and six, as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)- goal two and three. The policy of automatic promotion also aimed at reducing the cost of education per learner resulting from repeating classes. In a study aimed at determining teachers' perceptions about the effects out of implementing the policy of promoting learners automatically in Rawalpindi, Pakistan (Chohan & Qadir, 2011), it was observed that the great number of teachers involved in the study attested that the policy was not effective in the education quality discourse. The policy had a negative effect on pupils as they would see no compelling reason to work hard. It equally reduced teachers' determination to compel pupils to pass their subjects, since that had ceased to be a condition for promotion. This resulted in laxity in the entire teaching-learning process. Quoting Gomes-Neto & Hanushek (1994, p. 130), Chohan & Qadir (2011) stress that "*automatic promotions produce lower achievement in later grades because*



there is learning that goes on through repetition” leading to learners still lacking the competences required. In this study, I equally tried to understand how teachers and head teachers perceived the automatic promotion policy, especially through their own experiences. Their lived experiences were linked to a practical analysis on how such a policy of automatic promotion in Ugandan primary education is capable of stimulating national development.

In the past, especially the 1990s, there emerged a global trajectory of gender education as a cornerstone for equitable and sustainable development and good governance (Fennell & Arnot, 2008), especially with new thinking on embracing multiculturalism and diversity, as reform agenda for enhanced citizenship and nationhood. This gained attention with the promulgation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000. In its *Development Strategy Beyond 2015*, the United Nations (UN, 2012) emphasises the need for strong governance and democratic legislation to foster collaborative partnerships for sustainable development. The development strategy 2015 and the MDGs constitute an operational structure for the realisation of global development, bearing in mind that gender educational equality is required if nations are to address poverty effectively. The SDG-5 equally postulates that gender empowerment and equality through the realisation of SDG-4 (which hinges on ensuring that education is all inclusive and equitable, of the best quality and enhances opportunities for lifelong learning). Thus, gender inclusion in the current quality education discourse is a replica of the sustainable development agenda, which champions the logic that if education is to contribute to global development, development interventions should be sustainable and the education quality parameters should be incorporated in the training curriculum (Harlen, 2014; Hutchings, 2015). The major reason behind this inclusive education on the basis of gender has been that educating women enhances their identity, empowers them to participate in decision-making processes, assists them in owning resources they can use to improve the socioeconomic levels of their households and finally contribute to national development (Nowak & Dahal, 2016).

Education makes a greater contribution to the health and wellbeing of individuals especially when it targets gender equality and aims at educating the girl child. As USAID (2011, p. 3) observes:



“Greater educational attainment, especially for girls, leads to overall health improvements as well as to reduction in fertility and infant mortality. It has also been associated with increased infant birth weight, better nutrition, age-appropriate entry into school, better lifetime school achievement, and lower risk of contracting HIV/AIDS”.

This positions education as the best strategy for guaranteeing the enjoyment and protection of natural entitlements. With improved health, national human resource productivity levels increase which, in turn, improves living conditions.

Education’s contribution to good governance cannot be underrated. Education is among the institutions that can affect and is in turn affected by the political systems. The outcomes of education usually correspond with the political ideology of any given nation and these are usually promoted within the curriculum. As Afolabi & Loto (2012) argue, education would be the best foundation for good governance and development if it were free of politicisation. Quality education provides an understanding of natural entitlements and a framework for an all-encompassing leadership that promotes democratic governance. However, the authors note that decisions regarding education are made by those with authority, especially when such decisions are serve the interests of that authority rather than those of the majority of citizens. This fits well with Hickel’s (2012) observation that neoliberalism has succeeded in the political and economic spheres, although the quality of education is still in a dire state due to the overreliance on profit maximisation, which has turned education into a commodity and schools into markets.

It should be noted that the world over, the meaning of national development has shifted from the post-World War II emphasis on social democracy and development to neoliberalism, which has succeeded in spreading an ideological conviction of accepting that the free market enterprise characterised by perfect competition is the solution to global development challenges. There is a notion that only neoliberalist reforms can provide the best solutions to the current global challenges. The enhanced adoption of neoliberalism in the public sector domain has created a group of a few individuals and companies who control the means of production, in a regime of conformity to employers’ rules and standards. Within the field of education, for example, this has led



to the growth of private education service providers who concentrate on teaching pupils to pass the standardised exams for the purposes of matching the competition within the environment with the main success tool, namely, better academic performance grades (Akareem & Hossain, 2016; Harlen, 2014; Hutchings, 2015; Mathison, 2004). Education produces graduates who are trained to do the job effectively and cannot pose any question as they will lack the creativity and skills to think differently anyway. The disappearance of good governance and democracy in that way take shape.

Of note here is the fact that with the current neoliberalist reform agenda in education, the state has definitively retreated from being the provider of education (Hill & Kumar, 2009). Accordingly, it is clear that the state is no longer considering education as a natural right since it must be paid for by those who have the capacity to do so. In this regard, issues of democracy, good governance, gender inclusiveness and the enjoyment of human rights such as education cease to exist in the goal of the current neoliberal education discourse. Rather, profit maximisation and reduced inefficiencies throughout the education process become the prime consideration.

Thus, in presenting the available literature on quality education as national development, I adopted Nickel & Lowe's (2010) framework to offer my standpoint. Based on a synthesis of a number of studies on quality education, Nickel & Lowe (2010) propose a framework of quality education as a foundation for national development based on seven dimensions, as presented in Table 2.3.



Table 2.3: Dimensions of quality education

Dimension	Description
(i) Effectiveness	This connotes how best the overall aim of education is met.
(ii) Efficiency	Efficiency in the education quality discourse focuses on considerations of an economic nature such as ratio of the expended inputs to the outputs generated and how the use of resources can be maximised.
(iii) Equity	Equity focuses on the extent to which citizens can get access to educational services irrespective of their social orientations, classes and positions, for example; sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender and disability.
(iv) Responsiveness	This addresses issues related to attempts of ensuring that the teaching-learning process is based on the uniqueness of the learners' abilities.
(v) Relevance	The appropriateness of education to address and meet the learners' current and future needs.
(vi) Reflexivity	This dimensions relates with the ability of educational institutions to recognise and design educational packages that match with the changes in the environment for the purposes of dealing with uncertainties in the future.
(vii) Sustainability	Sustainability in education quality concentrates on behaviour changes and the extent to which learners can accept their responsibilities in society, especially for the longer-term future rather than the present. It equally takes charge of the local as well as global trends in the education sector.

Source: Adopted from Nikel & Lowe (2010, p. 599)

Emerging from the presentation on quality as national development and Nikel & Lowe's (2010) framework, it is clear that, much as the Ugandan government is emphasising increased access to education by introducing UPE, little improvement has been made with regard to quality education. The national policy on increased access to education, through its liberalisation, has indeed as Ravitch (2014) puts, created a cycle of generational poverty. Government's failure to address the constraints to quality



education in government-aided schools creates an avenue for the financially able parents to take their children to the well-stocked privately owned schools. These children end up getting the best grades, do more advanced courses at tertiary level and stand more chance of being employed than children from poor families. It is clear that the education sector in Uganda is creating cyclical poverty trends and, thus, education cannot significantly contribute to national development. I thus provide an assessment which will show that quality education may not necessarily enhance national development, especially given the neoliberal features of the Ugandan education system.

2.3.3 Limitations of quality education in stimulating national development

In this subsection, I analyse the linkage between quality education and national development. I begin by reflecting on the value of education in stimulating national development. Going by the theories of education and development, I reflect on the capability approach (Sen, 1999) in which education is regarded as a process that expands the freedoms that human beings inherently enjoy. I, however, take note of the role of schools in cultural reproduction, especially among culturally divided societies (Giroux, 2015), as well as the exam factory regime (Hutchings, 2015), reckoning on the thinking that education is political and schools constitute an arena for political struggle (Hossain et al., 2017; Hutchings, 2015). I also note that most of the available literature that links education to national development makes use of the foundations of human capital theory (HCT), which has attracted both methodological and application criticisms. Thus, guided by an evaluative question, *Does quality education stimulate national development?*, I present a review of existing literature on quality education and development in a more evaluative manner.

Scholars have consistently argued that education enhances the skills base and contributes towards national development (Adawo, 2011; Afzal et al., 2012; Nowak & Dehal, 2016). While there is a linkage between education and economic growth, this materialises under context-specific circumstances. Historical scholars such as Mill (1909), Marshall (1920) and, more recently, Tan (2014) and Kolomiiets & Petrusenko (2017) all attest that an increase in human capital accumulation is not related to economic growth and development. As Mill (1909) puts it, wealth only exists for the sake of people and, thus, people should not be viewed as the wealth of nations in the way Smith (1776) argues. There are other factors such as the operational environment,



demand for products and services, and the global and national competitiveness of the produced products and services that facilitate the transformation of human capital into productive ventures. These productive ventures in turn stimulate economic growth and development and, without them, development can never be achieved. The precursor to HCT, involving looking at community interests without considering the interests of the individual or individuals that make up a community fails to understand that different people have different interests and can come up with and employ different strategies to develop, not necessarily going through formal education.

According to HCT, individuals spend resources on education as well as training generally with an expectation of getting more economic benefits, commonly referred to as income in future. This notion is the foundation of methodological individualism in terms of which human capital formation is pursued by individuals who have a desire to maximise their interests. Although the proponents of HCT do not negate other non-monetary benefits emerging from education, such benefits (for example; social, cultural, intellectual and aesthetic benefits) are only regarded as positive externalities, even though they greatly affect the extent to which individuals will seek formal education and training.

The main argument in HCT is that education boosts one's skills which in due turn results into higher productivity that finally gets translated into to a higher wage at the workplace. Signalling theory, as proposed by Spence in 1973, provides a different explanation for the higher wage. Signalling theory suggests that one's education level indicates one's innate character, for example the propensity to be intelligent, dedicated to one's work, and able to manage time and follow instructions in the workplace. Signalling theorists hold the argument that schools classify learners based on their intelligence and commitment levels through the admission and grading processes. By so doing, schools come up with a supposed hierarchy of learners based entirely on their academic success. It is on this foundation that HCT bases the argument for predicting potential productivity levels. In practice, this helps employers sort out and assess applicants before they are employed. In this selection process, potential employees signal their desirable but skills that are not observable through the academic papers upon which employers assess them. Practically, in this regard employers require a certain minimum level of education to screen potential employees. Based on this,



signalling theorists argue that “*schooling may reflect higher productivity without causing it, because education is not the source but the signal of higher productivity of educated people since schools identify the able and committed individuals and eliminate the less able ones in the process*” (Tan, 2014, p. 422). Moreover, research findings indicate that no relationship exists between education and productivity (Mankiw et al., 2012). Education may thus increase one’s wage without increasing productivity level.

Signalling theorists agree that education levels determine the wage levels, especially during the initial stages of hiring employees. The main reason for this is that employers do not have sufficient information about the potential employee apart from the academic credentials. Beyond the hiring stage, signalling theorists argue that the tenure effect sets in and the wage ceases to be determined by academic qualifications but by productivity. Thus, wages may not follow one’s academic qualifications as HCT supposes. As one’s tenure increases, so the factors for determining the wage become more elaborate. Additionally, signalling theorists postulate the need to compare self-employed and salaried employees. If HCT is applied, it is assumed that salaried employees should earn much more than self-employed educated citizens. This has not been the case, however, as wages are also determined by a multitude of factors that differ country-wise. For instance, institutional factors such as trade unions, the demand and availability of an educated labour force and the quality of the labour force can all be critical in determining wages in a given profession. Hence, the relationship between schooling and higher wages has been disproved. For example, in Venezuela between 1960 and 2000, there was increased schooling and lower wages (Ortega & Pritchett, 2014). However, an increase in schooling without a corresponding number of jobs being created may result in markets being flooded with educated human resources without job. This way, HCT loses the foundation.

Another perspective from which to view education and national development is from that of education stimulating economic growth. This is another foundation of HCT, which postulates that education has an impact on a nation’s economic growth. HCT stipulates that while education does not increase an individual’s wages it does emphasise the positive externalities that arise from an increase in wages such as average national incomes (Pritchett, 2001). On the other hand, the relationship between education and economic growth is not a linear one (Ortega & Pritchett, 2014). In fact,



investing in human capital does not necessarily result in economic growth (Caselli, Esquivel & Lefort, 1996). In a cross-country survey, Benhabib & Spiegel (1994) found that human capital accumulation fails to stimulate economic growth and instead affects it negatively, in fact having a negative effect of schooling and economic growth (Islam, 1995). Although schooling increased significantly in some countries such as Jamaica, Peru, El Salvador, Jordan and Mexico between 1965 and 2000, these countries registered only a slight improvement and even negative growth in their total levels of production (Pritchett, 2001).

For the Marxists, as Bowles & Gintis (1975) argue, HCT is silent on the relevancy of class and the associated class conflicts in explaining labour market phenomena. Yet, wage issues structure individual employee attributes that are valued on the labour market, together with the social relations in the entire educational process that can be accounted for using class analysis. It should also be noted that the market wage rates are not exogenous to the production of firms but rather are an instrument for maximising profits. Worth noting is the fact that economic growth and development models commonly utilise time-based projections to ascertain the outcomes obtained from education. The higher the number of learners completing a level, the more it is assumed that the production function will be enhanced. However, as Hanushek & Woessmann (2007) argue, this line of thinking does not consider factors at the development level, and thus international comparisons may be misleading. Hanushek & Woessmann (2007, p. 25) pose the following question:

“Who would sensibly assume that the average student in a school in Ghana or Peru would gain the same amount of knowledge in any year of schooling as the average student in a school in Finland or Korea?”

This highlights the challenges we are likely to face if economic development is directly linked to the quality of education. After all, not all human capital required for economic development comes from the schooling process. The context-specific variations call for different skills and the pace at which such skills are acquired also varies.

Another issue of great concern that the national development agenda needs to address is the participation of those affected by development efforts in both the formulation of



policies and the design interventions aimed at stimulating development. There is a pool of research evidence that shows that actors have not been consulted in the education policy design process (Guo, 2010; Linyuan, 2012; Percy, Martin-Beltrán, Yazan & DeStefano, 2017; Zhong, 2006). This idea had earlier been raised by Ross & Gibson (2006), who depict that the lack of participation is by design an ideological concern that positions the central role of government in setting education standards and handing over to stakeholders who do not take part in the policy formulation process to meet the standards set. The lack of a clear communication framework shared by the different stakeholders automatically disadvantages those at the periphery (Department for Education, 2017; Hutchings, 2015). In such a situation, where the stakeholders are not involved in the policy formulation process to articulate the urgent education needs of the citizens, as well as the implementation requirements, education cannot contribute to national development.

The linkage between education and national development must be addressed with strategic development policies (Clark, 2011) to avoid negative consequences. Empirical research findings reveal that the changes exhibited in education structures negatively affect the highly educated people who are unemployed (Biagi & Lucifora, 2008). This problem is exacerbated, especially when there is a significant mismatch between the education structures and employment structures (Snieska, Valodkiene, Daunoriene & Draksaite, 2015). Clark (2011) argues that governments need to rethink their support of education that provides an opportunity for work-based training, rather than implementing policies that aim at increased enrolments but produce graduates who may never be absorbed in the labour market. Rafferty (2012) highlights the fact that education is unable to solve the unemployment question unless certain social distinctions, especially segregation of minority graduates, are addressed. Thus, quality education in itself is never a solution to unemployment but rather an agent of sources of evil, as graduates and highly qualified citizens fail to be absorbed in the labour market.

The above idea is in harmony with Akareem & Hossain's (2016) argument. As they clearly state, although agree that quality education is a stimulating factor for national development, this takes shape only when the trained human capital is utilised in productive employment to create quality goods and services. In instances where the



human capital invested in fails to become productive, the nation's growth trends may not show any benefit from education.

Uganda's unemployment rate is high and its population is increasing year after year. According to the national census of 2014, Uganda has a population of 34.6 million people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014), with young people below the age of 18 accounting for 51% of the population and the youth (between 18–30 years) accounting for 23%. After Niger, Uganda is one of the countries in the world with the youngest population who are dependents. According to a study done by ActionAid Uganda, youth unemployment in Uganda stands at 62% (Action Aid-AAU, DRT and UNNGOF, 2012). Much as the government is, under Vision 2040, trying to create jobs through wealth creation programmes and enhanced efforts to improve service delivery, much is still needed to stimulate economic growth. There is evidence that only a fraction of graduates in Uganda with some form of qualification are absorbed into the limited job market. By contrast, as a result of education liberalisation at least 400,000 students graduate from universities, both public and private per year. Unfortunately, projects registered by the Uganda Investment Authority indicate that only 150,000 jobs are created every year, which leaves behind an estimated 250,000 prone to being jobless (Kanyeheyo, 2015).

Death et al. (2015) observe that owing to the poor quality of education in Uganda and Tanzania, the youth prefer to leave school early enough to start doing non-formal jobs that would help them survive. This heightens the need to focus education on meeting the needs of the populace. With schools continuing to offer irrelevant, theory-based education, remedies for solving the global unemployment challenge are lacking.

In this study, I realise that there cannot be national development without addressing issues of income, lifestyle, capital, governance, human rights and so forth, which are facets of the human capital approach as well as a rights-based approach in national development undertakings. Thus, education for national development must incorporate quality parameters that address such issues. However, I reflect on this position from a neoliberalist approach and argue that the principle of maximising economic welfare through the free markets and the economic efficiency function has instead resulted in increasing problems with education quality. This is a result of concentrating education



policy design in the hands of a few individuals or key players in the education sector. To this effect, the relationship between education and national development remains insignificant. Rather, it is the economic value that continues to be highlighted in most of the development research and agenda, especially by the World Bank (McGrath, 2010). The overriding concern for this study was, therefore, to find out whether quality education can stimulate national development in Uganda where unemployment rates are high. The basis for this argument was that the investment in the human capital can contribute to national development only when those who have been trained become part of the labour force after school or when those who have been trained remain and work within the country (Akareem & Hossain, 2016). This suggests that in instances where there are high cases of labour migration, education may not necessarily contribute to national development.

2.3 Quality education as standards

Having discussed the theme of quality education as national development, I embark on quality education as standards because the strategic objectives and targets that nations and institutions set for the purposes of stimulating development are the ones that generally determine the kind of performance standards required to achieve the national/or organisational goals. The presentation on quality education as standards is structured into three parts: (i) the meaning of standards in education and their rationale, (ii) the dimensions of standards in education and (iii) the challenge experienced with education quality standards.

2.3.1 Meaning of education standards and their rationale

According to ISO/IEC Guide 2 (2004), a standard is referred to as a “*document established by consensus and approved by a recognized body that provides for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results aimed at achieving the optimum degree of order in a given context*” (ISO/IEC Guide 2, 2004, p. 10).

This definition articulates a number of preconditions for and features of an ideal standard. For example, there must be rules, guidelines and regulations meant to lay down an orderly manner of doing something in a given context. In addition, the process



of developing standards is through consensus among stakeholders and there must be a neutral, recognised and qualified body that issues the standards.

In the education sector, the standards are defined by the state in a curriculum that spells out the kind of knowledge to be taught (Hutchings, 2015; Ross & Gibson, 2006). As the Commonwealth Secretariat (2017) puts it, standards constitute a set of principles that are used to ascertain and improve on the quality of education. This presupposes that standards must be objective and that quality is a continuous process. Currently, the use of standards has become a global concern in all sectors including education, with nations developing National Standards Bodies (NSB). The ISO 9001:2000 and the subsequent IWA 2 reflect enhanced efforts to standardise the education sector and provide international guidelines for certified members on how to implement an effective education quality management system (ISO, 2014).

The history of standards in the education sector can be traced to the 1983 Nation at Risk report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which raised concerns over the quality of education in the United States. As the opening remarks of the report state (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 3), it constituted the foundation for standards in education.

“Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged pre-eminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the wellbeing of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments”.



This report raised national quality education concerns, compelling renewed national commitment to reinstate the glory of the American education system. In effect, states started setting standards to raise education quality. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, in terms of which standardised tests were instituted and used to evaluate whether students and schools were making yearly progress, was part of attempts aimed at addressing the issues raised by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). The NCLB was based on the premise that setting standards can improve learners' achievements in education (Hursh, 2004). Implementation of this policy was passed on to the federal governments, each tasked with the responsibility for ensuring that standards were met. Scores were disaggregated on the basis of race, special education and English language learners. Federal funding to schools was also based on the levels of achievement, where schools failing to make the required yearly progress would meet the costs of teaching through private organisations.

Quality in training and education depends on minimum standards being set for the purpose of measuring change, with these standards referring to the content of certain activities and also relating to how such activities are prepared, delivered and evaluated (Linyuan, 2012; Peercy et al., 2017). Education standards can be approached either directly or indirectly. Both approaches are assessment based and have a much more impact on the classroom teacher than on the learner. Indirect approaches do not mandate teachers to make changes in the classroom although teachers will still find it necessary to guide their learners. Indirect approaches take the form of external tests and examinations, exhibitions, projects and portfolios. Direct approaches, on the other hand, necessitate teachers to make changes to their classroom instruction. Teachers can decide to choose certain standards to focus on in the classroom, together with the entire lesson set up and delivery and with the mode of assessment also being predetermined in this regard (Marzano & Kendall, 1998).

Harlen (2014) identifies three forms of assessment: assessment, appraisal and evaluation. As Nusche, Laveault, MacBeath & Santiago (2012) put it, assessment focuses on judging individual learner performance based on predetermined goals. It encompasses classroom-based judgements based on class activities and internal exams, as well as external exams that are used to determine learners' level of learning achievement. Appraisal is used to judge the performance of professionals at school



level, for example teachers. Evaluation, on the other hand, is system oriented and is used to judge the schools' effectiveness, systems, policies, national and international rules and regulations.

The OECD (2017) states that decisions in education policy formulation should be informed by evidence, based on measuring skills, opportunities and outcomes. A number of standards are proposed in this regard. For example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). PISA addresses learners' creative as well as critical thinking skills, whereas PIAAC aims at assessing adults' proficiency in key foundation skills, for instance those in literacy, numeracy and problem solving, especially the ability to use information and communication technology. These programmes are based on the principle that an understanding of how teachers teach in the classroom and how students learn is the pivot for education reform agenda and policy formulation.

The education quality discourse is an area that has attracted global attention, especially in the bid to address the appalling education standards. Different definitions and quality frameworks have been developed to streamline focal areas that nations should put emphasis on as parameters for education quality standards. For example, the UNESCO (2005) framework for understanding quality education focuses on learner characteristics, context, enabling inputs and outcomes. Ghazi, Shah & Ullah (2015), on the other hand, concentrate on five dimensions: (i) quality of learners, (ii) quality learning environments, (iii) quality content, (iv) quality processes and (v) quality outcomes. Much as these frameworks provide a basis for conceptualising quality standards, there is no mention of teachers' understanding of these. Yet their understanding will affect the inputs, process and outputs. It is this neglect of teachers' understanding that has compelled the need to conduct this study.

Standards in quality endeavour to ensure consistency in the production of a product or service by generating zero defects (Guo, 2010; Sandru, 2008) through a set of established quality checks (Harvey, 2006). According to Harvey (2006), there are four areas for the setting and assessment of quality standards in education, namely: academic standards (learner intellectual abilities – often assessed by means of standard tests),



competence (learner technical abilities that may attract a professional confirmation), service standards (what the school may provide to facilitate the generation of quality education), and organisational standards (guidelines, principles and all the associated procedures that institute a system that generates quality). The four areas require a rigorous process that establishes realistic indicators on which standards are set. When focus is put on standardised tests, teachers' level of flexibility to meet the different needs of learners is constrained. As Giroux (2015) and Ross & Gibson (2006) argue, teachers are more likely to give attention only to those learners who are seen as likely to get better grades and pay less attention to weak learners who are likely to fail. This way, teachers' classroom practices significantly affect the quality of education.

Apart from the United States, in other developed countries, especially the OECD countries, quality standards have been anchored in Early Childhood Education centred services with the aim of responding to a growing demand for improved learning outcomes, as well as increasing growing female labour force participation (OECD, 2013a). As Shuayb & O'Donnell (2008) point out, in England, Scotland, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden and the Netherlands, standards in the last 40 years have been set in conjunction with the aims, values and purposes of primary education, with a focus on preparing children for the future life bearing in mind the multicultural nature of society as well as the ever-changing economic and work environment in which learners require a hybrid of skills to position them in a more competitive manner in the international marketplace (Hussein, 2017; Hutchings, 2015).

Like Sweden in the 1990s, other countries have embraced educational standards which are based on citizenship education, as well as healthy, safe and sustainable living, while the role of primary education is to encourage young children's awareness of such issues (Shuayb & O'Donnell, 2008). This study posits that much as the extent to which national educational standards may be achieved rests primarily in the teacher's hands, the neoliberal discourse has influenced the achievement of standards towards the creation of competitive citizens in the labour market. This way, therefore, national concerns such as citizenship, participation, empowerment, good governance, social justice and inclusion – values that a teacher may inculcate in pupils' minds during the early stages of their education – have been inclined towards neoliberal thinking, with a focus on passing and remaining competitive in the market economy.



In some instances, the understanding of quality in developing countries has been linked to temporal standards, especially as emerging from quality improvement projects and policies in education. For example, in Chile (Swedish International Development Agency [SIDA], 2000), the understanding of quality education was derived from the 1999 education project that focused on improving the teaching-learning environment in order to attain a higher standard of academic achievement. In Guatemala, the Nueva Escuela Unitaria project of 1989 provided yet another dimension of quality education. The project aimed at stimulating and empowering the learning process by involving the participation of educational stakeholders (Kraft, 1998; UNICEF, 2000). This participation of all the educational stakeholders was intended to ascertain the kind of education that would be coherent with the needs of both the community and the general environment. In the Dutch Caribbean, quality education relates to the situation, adherence to the quality assurance standards and the overall government policy (Henkens, et al. 2011).

In Ireland, as the Department of Education & Skills (2016) highlights, a quality framework has been designed to point out standards for good practice, focusing on teaching, learning, leadership and management areas. Clear standards and statements of both effective practice and highly effective practice have been articulated. There is, thus, a standardised framework that guides teaching and learning in primary schools. This has constrained teaching and learning only in the described dimensions of good practice, thereby limiting the creativity that would stimulate learning focused on the turbulent needs of learners. With standardised training materials, modes of teaching and assessment, the teachers' role appears to be a pre-set one. Their interactions with learners which created cordial relationships have been replaced by standards that teachers must follow, not only because they are required to ensure improved learner performance but also because teachers are evaluated on the basis of the set standards.

In Uganda, standards for primary school education are spelt out in the primary school curriculum and aligned with the three levels – lower primary (primary one to three), middle primary (primary four) and upper primary (primary five to seven) – that constitute the primary education cycle. At all three levels, there are specific performance evaluation parameters. Ironically, these standards are flawed and are contradicted by the UPE policy of automatic promotion from one class to another as the

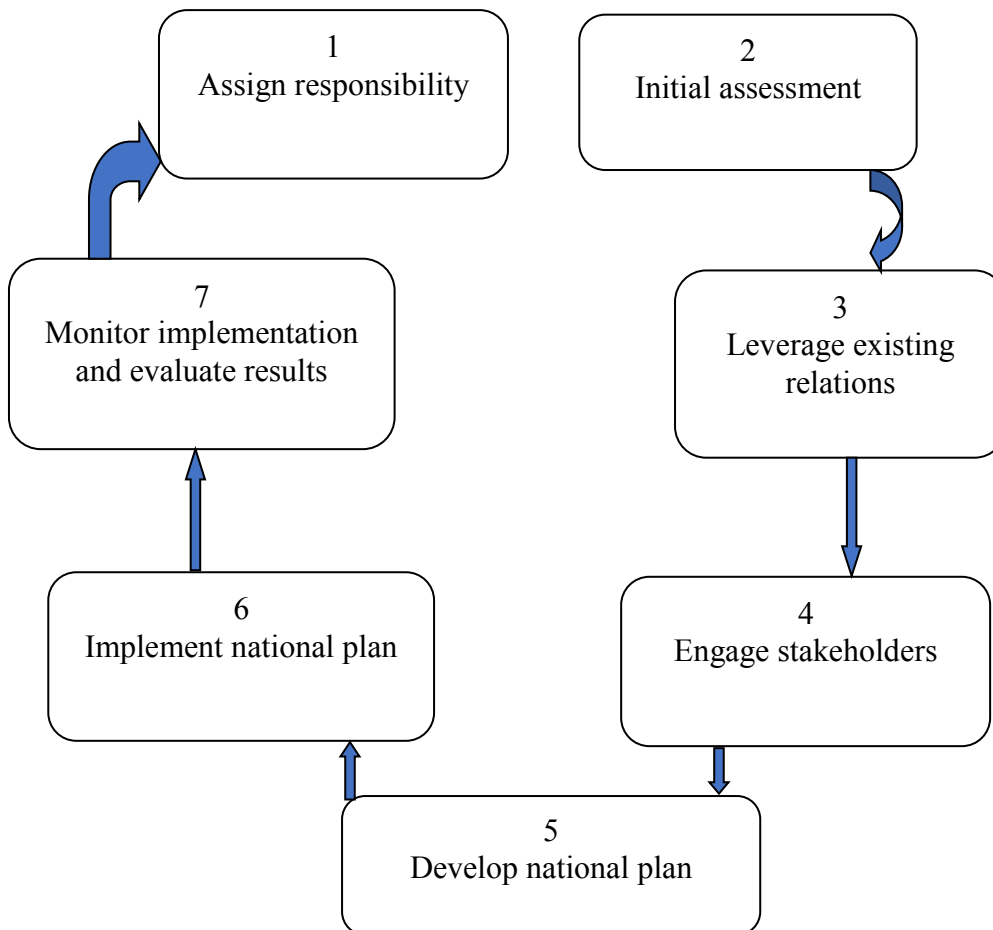


government strategy to reduce expenditure on repeats, increase access and reduce drop-out rates. This has caused performance gaps which are indicative of poor quality. For example, it was found that 98% of all primary three children were not able to read and understand a story text pertaining to primary two (a level they had completed), while 80% were not able to solve at least two numerical written division sums pertaining to primary two (UWEZO, 2010). Quality in primary education in Uganda is measured by routine classroom assessments administered by teachers and end-of-term examinations (JICA, 2012).

In the private schools, however, there are no automatic promotions with academic achievement being the determining factor. Although standards provide uniformity in teaching and learning, the question that remains unanswered is why the government institutes standards selectively, thus disadvantaging public schools and advantaging private schools. It would seem that parents who have the financial means no longer send their children to government schools where standards in both the learning-teaching environment and overall academic achievement are appalling. The extent to which the government is pulling out of the education sector under the liberalisation and reform of the public sector reflects a strategic move to embrace neoliberalism and has negatively affected the quality of primary schools. Central to this study was to ascertain how teachers execute their teaching role in the classroom amid the vague standard requirements, having nevertheless to account for their actions. It is clear that in order to maintain standards, the ability of teachers to streamline the requirements of quality education by carrying out their work roles effectively is vital. This is, however, affected by contradictory government policy in the Ugandan environment.

The ISO (2014) provides an ideal road map for setting standards in education comprising seven interlinked steps that deserve mention. The roadmap articulates the engagement levels required and encouraged for the effective adoption and implementation of a bottom-up standards setting framework. The seven steps are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Steps in setting education standards



Source: Adopted from ISO (2014, p. 55)

Step one: Assigning responsibility aims at ensuring that a lead technical person is assigned responsibility for the entire standard-setting process. This should preferably be a person from the National Standards Body (NSB). The NSB’s relationship with an academic entity in setting up the standards should be clear at this time to avoid ambiguities in information gathering and task accomplishment.

Step two: Initial assessment is a context assessment that aims at understanding the existing relationships and cooperation levels that already exist with other institutions. It includes the supporting technical personnel who could help earmark entry points to setting standards.

Step three: Leveraging existing relations aims at the creation of an action plan as a result of the initial assessment. This can take the form of enhanced emphasis of



standards in the teaching environment even before designing the would-be standards to follow. This stage calls for a shift from being passivity to proactive orientations in emphasising standards. Enhanced communication about standards constitutes an effective strategy in this regard. Management might choose to strategically emphasise the essence of standards in all formal communications.

Step four: Stakeholder engagement aims at enhancing stakeholders' understanding of the need for standards, as well as soliciting their views on the kind of standards they would wish to be captured in the teaching-learning process. Stakeholder engagements can take different forms such as workshops and meetings that target key stakeholders in the education sector. Students, teachers, education managers, ministry officials, professionals and past students can constitute a robust foundation for stakeholder consultations.

Step five: Developing a national plan entails a foundational reflection on what may already exist in a given country in the bid to galvanise the operations of the NSB and the education institution intending to come up with standards. This should fit within the existing national strategy of the sector under consideration.

Step six: Implementing the national plan involves the translation of the activities that took place in step five into practice. This calls for being systematic in-task execution and continuous hints on the benefits of standards. Participatory approaches and management's commitment of resources are critical to the success of this step.

Step seven: Monitoring the implementation process and evaluating results. This step aims at a continuous tracking of progress over time, as well as assessing the realisation of the set targets over time. The emerging results from monitoring activities are critical for making administrative decisions or taking corrective action. In addition, the results of evaluation undertakings can be used to come up with lessons to direct the next course of action during the implementation process or act as a source of data for designing standards in another context.

In setting educational standards, the roadmap provides for a coherent process in which stakeholder views must be incorporated. However, the current education regime has



compelled countries and organisations to institute educational standards without consulting education stakeholders merely to match the pace of education competition in the market. In this regard, standards are mandatory. The roadmap suggests that standards should ideally be voluntary but when legislative bodies begin using standards as a basis for legislation, they become mandatory and this has been the case generally when emphasising standards with an economic bearing (Gerundino & Weissinger, 2011). The ISO (2014) acknowledges that much as standards bring economic benefits to organisations, awareness levels and perceptions of these standards vary across industries and organisations. When standards are seen by the internal staff as a burden or as bringing an extra cost to an organisation, the benefit becomes minimal.

2.3.2 Dimensions of standards in education

Standards in education articulate both the description of what is supposed to be taught and learnt, usually spelt out in the curriculum, and the results of learner assessments that explain the extent to which learners have acquired knowledge, skills and competences and how they are able to apply them (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2017). The Commonwealth Secretariat (2017), in providing definitions and description of standards in education, proposes six universal standards or principles that deserve recognition. They include effective, empowering, equity, sustainable, appropriate and wellbeing and safety.

Effective

Education that is effective ensures there is quality achievement of a specific goal, or the extent to which educational institutions are able to achieve what they are expected to with regard to helping individuals realise their needs and those of their communities. This requires clear standards for the generation of evidence to confirm that specific requirements have been met in specific contexts and among different populations. The underlying thrust of the principle of effectiveness is how well an alternative works, as well as what it takes for it to work (Nikel & Lowe, 2010).

Empowering

Quality education is looked at from the perspective of being able to equip learners with knowledge, skills and capabilities that allow them take part in decision-making and to negotiate, have an influence and give instructions. This perspective also includes leaders



who make decisions that affect learners' wellbeing (Nussbaum, 2010; Tikly & Barrett, 2013). Universal quality indicators should be able to ascertain the extent to which school graduates at any level can exhibit skills of individual self-identity and defend their human dignity.

Equity

Equity in education entails attempts to ensure that all learners have equal opportunities to achieve their full potential in education. This requires putting in place conditions, policies and structures that can eliminate all the barriers that advantage and disadvantage some learners in realising their full educational achievements. Equity aims at ensuring that the differences among learners, for example social, economic, demographic, geographical, age, gender, race, culture or sexual orientation, are eliminated (Marmot & Allen, 2014; UNESCO, 2015; WHO, 2015).

Sustainable

The principle of sustainability as a parameter in defining quality education standards holds that education should be able to solve and address the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to equally meet their needs. Nickel & Lowe (2010) emphasise that throughout the education cycle, sustainability standards should emphasise behaviour changes in learners and their acceptance of responsibilities specifically as regards goal-setting, decision-making and evaluation. Sustainability standards should address the long-term future over the present in a manner that addresses both the local and global targets of education. The principle of sustainable education underscores the synergies in the economic, social and environmental aspects as complementary threads in development. Under the auspices of UNESCO's Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) efforts have been made to ensure that ESD is incorporated in the teaching-learning curriculum. There is evidence that ESD significantly improves students' learning outcomes (Laurie et al., 2016).

Appropriate

This principle holds that quality education should be education that is relevant in meeting the needs of the community members. The education content, methods,



resources and equipment to be used in the learning process must be scientifically valid and easily adopted and used within the local environments where learning takes place. It also connotes the use of teaching-learning resources that communities can afford to acquire, make and use. Appropriateness also requires that relevant and context-specific delivery approaches are employed to ensure that learning addresses the specific needs of communities.

Wellbeing and safety

Quality education should promote and protect health and wellbeing and strengthen learners' resilience. Quality targets in this perspective encompass the health and wellbeing of citizens by providing education that protects them from health risks. Such education includes learning about a healthy environment, sanitation, healthy eating habits and dietary conditions, sexual health, physical health and protection from all injuries resulting from a poor learning environment.

It should be noted that the universality of these standards rests on how they are planned for and incorporated in the curriculum and how teachers carry out their classroom teaching and assessment. With the current neoliberal influence in education, where standards are used to standardise what is to be taught rather than assisting teachers to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of learners, effective follow up and realisation remain on the periphery. With the standards being used to hold teachers accountable for their actions and with an overreliance on standardised examination scores, classroom teaching is skewed towards addressing only examinable aspects. The next section, therefore, presents literature on the challenges of using standards in the understanding of quality education.

2.3.3 The challenges experienced with education quality as standards

Education standards should define what a learner should be able to know and do. With the neoliberal reform agenda, standards are no longer helping teachers develop curricula to meet the needs of learners but rather they are used to standardise what should be taught. The overreliance on standards has reduced the human role of teachers in classroom instruction to that of a pre-set conduit through which learning can take place.



As Giroux (2015) observes, the introduction of standards in education have not increased learners' academic achievement. Instead, there have been increased cases of inequality and high drop-out rates. Within the neoliberal discourse, as Sims (2017) argues, standards are rather aimed at increased compliance through the education system by those who can afford anyway. Schools that meet the set standards make profits in the globalised economy as they can attract greater numbers of pupils. Those that fail to meet the standards are blamed for their failure and thus fail to attract more pupils. In Uganda, for example, the government grant to both government-aided and some private schools is based on the number of pupils in each school. This has increased the competition among schools and thus those that excel in standardised exams attract more pupils.

De Vries (2011) observes that if standardisation in education is to benefit the sector, the successful implementation of these standards depends on the national policy, the availability of resources, the management of relationships and cooperation among the different stakeholders in the field of education. This implies that there must be a national coordinating body to oversee the way the implementing institutions conduct business as well as to provide constant guidance as a way to ensure effective compliance. Government is in this regard also critical for providing the supporting resources. In the Ugandan context, however, the primary education sector has made no effort to gain certification from the international standards bodies. The standards emphasised are those articulated in the national primary school curriculum; however, the design process has been contested as many of the stakeholders did not participate. Furthermore, no resources have been developed to ensure that teaching is uniform throughout the country. Ultimately, the implementation process rests entirely in the hands of the classroom teachers, who in this case do not appreciate the essence of the standards and regard the concept as a burden. Accordingly, it is clear that variations in implementation resulting from a lack of awareness of the importance of standards and a lack of resources will not improve the quality of education in Ugandan primary schools.

Ayers & Ayers (2011), Hinchey (2008), Hutchings (2015) and Campbell & Kyriakides (2000) encapsulate the challenges experienced with education standards from the perspectives of the commonly used categories of education standards, namely: (i) the national policy standards stipulated by the national curriculum in which the content,



learning outcomes, resources and assessment methods are articulated, (ii) the planned standards set by teachers as they prepare to deliver the curriculum content, which must be contextualised based on the learners' capacity, needs and interests, and (iii) the standards achieved by learners on a given set of tasks, tests or examinations. The held notion, as articulated by the aforementioned scholars, is that the standards set at the national level will feed directly into the planned and attained standards, yet this is impossible owing to variations in classroom management, pedagogical skills, learners' competences and so forth. In the Ugandan case, where the curriculum design process does not allow for the inclusion of a fair teacher representation, the implementation process becomes embroiled in a lack of appreciation and implementation flaws. Strict observance of standards, therefore, as a determinant of what should be taught, and not as a guide to what should be taught, disadvantages learners. This observation is critical in directing the orientation of this study, given the fact that the teachers' understanding and classroom practices have been neglected in the attempt to define and set education quality standards in the Ugandan education system, despite the fact that they are the ones expected to meet the standards that are set. Their understanding and the standard requirements are likely to conflict during the teaching-learning process.

A similar argument was developed by Rehman, Ali & Khan (2014). They identified teachers' poor quality pedagogical skills as the main reason for pupils' low level of achievement and poor quality education in Pakistan. Borrowing from Mirza (2003), they based their argument on the fact that learning requires inputs, which must be processed to generate outputs. The inputs here denote the resources required to train, the process denotes the content, methods, organisation of learning and delivering skills, whereas the outputs mean the performance of learners. They argue that standards should not only focus on the outputs but also the inputs and processes. Currently, due to the effects of global neoliberal reform in education that links the notion of education standards to the teaching-learning process, focus has been placed on the national curriculum perspective (Clarke, 2012, Henkens et al. 2011), articulating learners' expected level of achievement but with less regard for the quality of the classroom teacher who supports, delivers and stimulates learning.

In China, as Linyuan (2012) reports, the standards in the nationwide New Curriculum Reform (NCR), which were intended to match the opportunities and solve the



challenges emanating from globalisation, posed a significant professional challenge for teachers. Reporting on teachers' lived experiences of the NCR, Linyuan (2012) observed that whereas the new curriculum was welcomed, it increased teachers' workloads because they had to complete the content of the new curriculum while attending professional training courses. In addition, challenges were experienced with dropping the old ways of doing things to match the requirements of the new curriculum, increased job insecurity and adapting to a regime where teachers had to turn from being an expert to becoming a learning facilitator. A similar observation is made by Hutchings (2015) in terms of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) supervision in England. Borrowing from an idea by Guo (2010), Linyuan, (2012) reports that the standards in the new curriculum caused teachers great anxiety.

Peercy et al. (2017) also found out that teachers in the United States found it challenging to adapt to a new curriculum comprising the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The findings suggest that new curriculum standards destabilise teachers' status quo and this may affect the way they transform the curriculum standards into reality. Still, the challenges related to standards in Pakistan and China reveal that the notion of standards in education tends to hinder the generation of quality education in diverse environments. The curriculum standards in Uganda, especially those articulated in the current thematic curriculum for the primary education sector, are no different as they have compromised learners' achievement in comprehension and literacy. This is because standards have ceased to be a guiding framework, becoming instead legislation in themselves. Under such circumstances, teachers' creativity and enthusiasm in teaching has been sacrificed for an overreliance on standards.

According to Clarke (2012), the neoliberal agenda has revolutionised the education sector by overhauling the curriculum. This now emphasises performance-related evaluations for both teachers and learners using standardised test scores. With the encouragement of more sources and providers of education, the performance-based education regime has, by default, instituted a new education regime based on competition that has increased consumer choice and expectations. However, as Sims (2017) argues, the use of standardised scores to measure performance ignores learners' differences such as the learner's, health, background, parents' level of education, age, language of origin, parents' poverty levels and so forth. These factors, as the research



findings reveal, account for over 40% of learners' achievements (Lytton & Pryt, 1998). The presence of diverse factors in determining learners' achievement levels calls for competent teachers who can give individual attention to every learner. In view of this concern this study opted to concentrate on ascertaining the extent to which teachers' understanding and classroom practices affect the quality of primary education.

Davies & Bansel (2007) observe that with the growth and development of the neoliberal agenda, the governance relationships that previously existed between the state, the private sector and institutions such as schools and hospitals supported the provision of collective services. However, these were reconstituted to form part of the market under the neoliberal discourse. Within the neoliberal agenda, nothing has been left distinctive or special about the services that human beings need, be it health or education. They are regarded as services and products to be sold and bought in the marketplace (Pratt, 2016).

This has compelled the traders of such services to focus on achieving the end results that diverse markets are interested in purchasing in a more contractually designed enterprise. Ideally, this has changed the focus of traditional education on holistic teaching to one where standardised scores are achieved so as to be able to compete in the market environment. Considering how education institutions have obtained certification with ISO, there is no doubt that education has become a commodity in the market. First, the ISO methodology is clear in that standards are only developed where there is a clear market requirement and where the economic value can be ascertained (ISO) mainly based on the annual sales returns. The extent to which this can be applied to education institutions clearly illustrates that education has become a commodity in the market, which schools are selling and the public has the opportunity to buy, depending on their capacity. I argue that education that is looked at in this way cannot equip learners with lifelong skills, which narrows the focus of quality education. Education managers will always place emphasis on those aspects that can improve their schools' image for the purposes of attracting more learners. This is done with a view to maximising profits from the increased sales volumes in that regard. I also posit that irrespective of teachers' wider understanding of quality education and their ability to offer the best, the market conditions will hold him/her accountable according to the set quality standards. The classroom practices, therefore, will equally be skewed to the



realisation of the set standards. As reflected in the available literature, standards in education are a reflection of the national curriculum and the standardised scores that are used to grade learners. However, the standardised scores do not exactly represent learners' comprehension, mastery and knowledge levels. Instead, teachers focus their teaching on simply ensuring that pupils are prepared for the standardised tests and examinations.

In the next subsection, therefore, I present literature on the understanding of quality education as accountability, arguing that schools' success levels are based on how well their pupils perform in terms of grades based on standardised scores. That way, scores provide a measure for accounting for the teaching-learning process. Within the neoliberal reform agenda, schools that have a majority of learners with the best grades are inherently rewarded by the prevailing competition through improved school image, increased pupil enrolment and the associated profits.

2.4 Quality education as accountability

In the previous section, a review of quality education as standards was presented. In this section, I present literature on a synthesis of scholarly writings on the understanding of quality education as accountability. The main argument in this theme is that if standards are to be met, there is need for a clear accountability function to direct human actions, as well as provide evidence regarding the use of resources in meeting the standards. This presentation is anchored on the neoliberalism reforms in education that reward efficiency and hold individual schools accountable for their performance. The section begins by explicating the concept of accountability in a quality education context and subsequently, the implications of education as accountability in a neoliberalism perspective are reviewed.

2.4.1 Meaning of accountability

Accountability in the management discourse has been defined differently, sometimes being regarded as political desiderata with meanings related to concepts such as transparency and good governance of which participation, equity, integrity, efficiency, economy and effectiveness form part (Bovens, 2010). According to the OECD (2011), accountability literally means to take an account of something and involves the interaction of those who have power and those who are delegated power to act. This



definition implies that there must be two parties, one to be presented with what has happened by he or she who is accounting. Accountability has been widely applied to the management of public resources, especially public finances, with connotations such as answerability, and demanding and giving reasons for certain conduct and actions (Roberts & Scapens, 1985). Although the notion of education accountability has gained attention in the recent past, it was formally defined and used in managing education institutions in the early 1970s (Levin, 1974; Sinithies, 1971), with the performance of the different actors used as an accountability measure.

Accountability is generally conceptualised as a relationship that exists between two or more parties. If the relationship is thriving, this idea would point to the fact that the parties involved are accountable to each other (Arbeiter & Harley, 2010). With regard to the democratic societies of the Western countries in the last 20 years or so, governments embarked on applying a particular view of accountability to be able to address concerns from the public that relate with effective use of tax resources. Following this view, accountability has come to refer to the requirement of a public body or official to offer answers to questions that interrogate the use of public funds, how officials do perform their assigned public duties and the extent to which anticipated results are achieved. As Rasmussen & Zou (2014) put it, accountability is considered to be best described by six imperative questions: (i) What is to be accounted for? (ii) To whom is the account owed? (iii) Who is expected to provide the account? (iv) What is the nature of the accountability required? (v) What are the consequences of providing an account? and (vi) Who is held accountable? In this regard, accountability becomes a vital attribute of education in the public context and, indeed, helps to keep the public in schooling. Although Rasmussen and Zou's (2014) typology implies a number of stakeholders, there are overlaps in ascertaining who accounts with much focus placed on the classroom teacher who acts as the pedagogical leader (Ljunggren, 2014; Merchant, Ärlestig, Garza, Johansson, & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012) and at the same time as the primary stakeholder to account for what takes place in the school.

In a related context, the OECD (2011), Argon (2015) and Bovens (2005) define accountability as the management of the relationship that exists between the actors and the stakeholders. The stakeholders, for example, the government, local leaders, parents and other institutions, have an interest in what the actors (teachers and pupils) do



(which includes perceptions, practices and the outcomes of the actors' activities). With regard to the UPE policy in Uganda, at its inception in 1997, the government aimed at supporting only four primary school age going children per family. This government support led to an increase in the demand for education and, in 2003, the policy focus was changed and all eligible children were enrolled (Arbeiter & Harley, 2010; Bategeka & Okurut, 2006; MoES, 2017; Moyi, 2013). Amidst a lack of adequate infrastructure, teachers and instructional materials, the government was compelled to liberalise the education sector with the intention of increasing access to education. Liberalisation in turn led to an increase in the number of private schools run by individuals, religious organisations, NGOs and communities. The policy implementation equally coincided with one of the new public sector reforms that decentralised public service delivery which empowered district authorities to develop, approve and implement their development plans, inclusive of education plans (Winsor Consult Rwanda & Measure Africa, 2016). In particular, the 1997 Local Government Act (The Republic of Uganda, 1997) placed the management of pre-primary, primary, special needs and technical schools under the management of Local District Authorities. These were tasked to register children, distribute instructional materials and receive central government remittances to schools. At the same time, the local government authorities were tasked with accounting for the resources released.

The definitions above view accountability from the perspective of the relationships within institutional arrangements. Much as this study incorporates this descriptive meaning of accountability, it focuses mainly on the normative meaning of accountability as a virtue (Bovens, 2010) to encompass all standards applicable to the evaluation of the behaviour of a public actor. In the education sector, this would mean taking stock of all forms of behaviour by government officials, school managers, teachers, parents and pupils.

In the current Ugandan primary education system, the primary stakeholders enhancing the accountability function include the Ministry of Education and Sports, local authorities and school management committees (SMCs). As stipulated in the guidelines for the implementation of UPE, the MoES is entrusted with training and retraining teachers, the provision of training materials, classrooms, supervision and monitoring of UPE and providing the right curriculum. Regarding expenditure, the MoES provides



two grants; a capitation grant and a school facilities grants. Capitation grants are paid on the basis of the number of pupils in a school as well as the pupils' class level. As Bategeka & Okurut (2006, p. 2) note, "the monthly capitation grant per child was fixed at about US\$5 per pupil for classes from primary one up to primary three, and US\$8 per pupil for classes from primary four to primary seven, payable for a fixed period of 9 months per year". The MoES is equally charged with providing guidelines on how the capitation grants should be spent. Accordingly, 50% of the funds released are to be spent on instructional materials, 30% on co-curricular activities, 15% on school management such as repairs and payment of utilities and 5% on school administration (MoES, 1998). The funds are, therefore, conditional and must be spent on the purpose for which they are released. There is also a clear structure in place that stipulates the flow of funds from the consolidated budget to the operational budgets and finally to the end user.

The transfer of funds for education is centrally controlled and is effected by the Government of Uganda. From the consolidated funds account, money is transferred to the Ministry of Education and Sports operational accounts and the corresponding votes such as districts and municipalities. The local authorities at that level – the chief administrative officers (CAOs), sub-county chiefs and the SMCs – take responsibility for ensuring that funds are put to the right use. The CAOs are entrusted with ensuring that released funds are not diverted to do other things, they reach schools in time, there is proper budgeting and the local councils are briefed on the implementation of UPE, as well as ensuring that the disbursed funds are effectively accounted for. At a sub-county level, the sub-county chiefs represent the CAOs and are supposed to visit schools regularly, ensure that government bylaws on UPE are implemented, keep a record of pupils and teachers per schools, ensure that there is proper accountability of all funds, as well as ensuring that schools have sufficient facilities.

As Makaanu et al. (2015) state, the SMCs are statutory representatives of government at every school level. They are accountable for all school property and funds disbursed to schools. They are also charged with the responsibility of ensuring that schools have a strategic direction in the form of a school development plan, they approve and manage school budgets, as well providing the overall managerial direction of the school. Overall, the primary school stakeholders in Uganda champion and ensure that there is



proper accountability in primary schools. In this regard, accountability is taken as the methods that actors use to justify their actions as well as those which stakeholders use to make actors account for their actions.

Using Crouch and Winkler's (2008) typology, Makaaru et al. (2015) provide a framework in which the relationships between different education stakeholders become pertinent to ensure that public expenditure on education is accounted for. Away from the central government, the relationship moves down the hierarchy to the household level where parents have their statutory responsibilities. It is essential to note here that with the liberalisation of the education sector in Uganda, a number of actors, in particular private education institutions, civil society organisations and NGOs came into existence. Each actor has an obligation and the sector accountability function recognises the input from each actor for the realisation of the goals of the MoES. For example, other than ensuring that financial resources are utilised effectively, the public holds the key players responsible, for instance teachers as they execute their daily duties.

2.4.2 Forms of accountability in education

According to Loeb & Figlio (2011), accountability in the education sector has gained significant attention in the past few decades across the globe. With this attention, a number of accountability forms and frameworks have emerged (Hooge, Burns & Wilkoszewski, 2012) aimed at improving the delivery of education services. As Rasmussen & Zou (2014) emphasise, the following forms of accountability are widely used in the education sector: (i) performance accountability, (ii) market accountability, (iii) professional accountability and (iv) regulations and compliance accountability. Each of these will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Performance accountability

This form of accountability recognises the importance of education stakeholders in providing feedback on the institutional performance targets (OECD, 2011) in which specific objectively verifiable indicators (Garn & Cobb, 2008) are clearly spelt out, rather than procedures involved in the process of generating quality education. Periodic performance reports on school-wide assessments against performance indicators is a common feature under performance accountability. Not only does accountability focus on academic performance but also on the great value education adds to society. As



Manna & McGuinn (2013) suggest, this form of accountability is believed to trigger interventions to improve the quality of education.

Helgoy & Homme (2016) argue in this regard that a precondition for performance accountability is making relevant information on learning outcomes available to the majority stakeholders who assess the education institutions. This calls for prior agreement between stakeholders on the education goal and objectives to ensure commonality in the assessment areas by all stakeholders (Garn & Cobb, 2013).

In Uganda, although the Education Act 2008 (The Republic of Uganda, 2008) stresses performance accountability as a tool for enhancing teamwork and hard work among the teachers, its pitfalls cannot be underrated. Experiences across the world have shown that performance accountability cannot help to improve the quality of education (Manna & McGuinn, 2013). For example, Ravitch (2010) observed that performance accountability as a measure of academic performance did not have a substantial effect on learning among disabled children. Instead, overreliance on performance measures led to undesirable practices, focusing the teaching and learning process just on the skills that would be tested. In highlighting differences in learners' achievement across public schools, the NCLB Act (2002) brings out disparities in educational attainment resulting from an over-emphasis on proficiency in literacy and mathematics, thus negating the value of other subjects that are of equal importance to overall learner achievements. Performance accountability treats learners as commodities, as those who attain high test scores increasingly enhance the school image. This has compelled schools to concentrate on the few who are able, thereby disadvantaging underperformers. The practice of cream skimming and the exclusion of children considered to be expensive to educate (Hutchings, 2015, Ravitch, 2010), which is a feature of performance accountability, is a threat to the generation of quality education. Zhang (2012) discusses the fact that the Chinese government had to introduce education quality and monitoring to overcome the use of national assessment test scores as a tool for enhancing education quality.

The Ugandan standards with regard to performance accountability provide no better prospects, as standardised scores are used to assess learners' educational attainment (Wang, Beckett & Brown, 2010). Specifically, as Byamugisha & Ogawa (2010) put it,



the quality of education in Uganda is measured by an absolute score between 0 and 100%, later graded to a scale of 1 to 9, with one as the best aggregate and 9 as the worst. Grades for the examinable four papers (English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) are averaged to come up with a final level of performance between divisions 1 and 4. In this way, pupils' performance is entirely assessed by scores (Guloba, Wakadala & Bategeka, 2010). This study concentrates on finding out how teachers adhere to performance accountability, in particular, given their understanding of quality, and how they practise quality education in the classrooms.

Market accountability

As the OECD (2008) puts it, market accountability in education refers to the form of competition that exists among the institutions providing education services. Although this form of accountability has been commonly applied to the economic and business environments (Malcolm, 2017), it has increasingly become accepted practice as a result of the neoliberal reforms that have taken place in education. Market accountability interrogates the relationship that exists between the producers and the consumers of the products and services (Malcolm, 2010). In the education sector, as Erdağ & Karadağ (2017) emphasise, market accountability reflects a situation in which schools are the producers of goods and services and the parents are the consumers. Hence, the consumers hold the producers accountable by considering the outputs that inform examination results. This is operationalised in the regular communications that schools maintain with the parents, with the former presenting the performance results of the school. As Erdağ & Karadağ (2017) argue, schools are subject to market-focused expectations and the pressures generated compel schools to work hard.

In Uganda, with the liberalisation of the education sector, communities now have a variety of schools to choose from, mainly determined by the programmes schools offer and the educational learning outcomes. The government's role in market accountability is to create an environment that prevents a monopoly of education services (Darling-Hammond, 1988). But as the OECD (2011) notes, few countries can practise market accountability in education effectively owing to constraints that restrict the free mobility of learners. For example, the current thematic curriculum in Uganda in which teaching



in the local language up to primary four is emphasised, does not allow learners to freely move and study from areas that speak a different local language.

To ascertain the current state of market accountability, I elicited the views of the participants on how schools account for their actions in a free market enterprise. It was clearly pointed out that when a school performs better in the PLE, parents are more likely to send their children to such a school. Likewise, when a school performs poorly, it risks losing children to other schools.

Professional accountability

Professional accountability involves adherence to professional codes of conduct, as perceived and verified by professional peers (Bruns, Filmer & Patronas, 2011; Levitt, Janta & Wegrich, 2008). In explaining professional accountability, Sockett (1980, p. 11) argues that *“the question professionals debate is not whether certain results have been achieved, but whether professional standards of integrity and practice have been adhered to”*. In terms of the perspective of this study, this form of accountability attempts to audit teachers’ conduct when teaching, going beyond the individual teacher level to interrogate the conduct of schools as institutions of learning in a manner that is professionally accepted given the professional standards and code of conduct. For example, teachers in Uganda must register with the Ministry of Education and Sports and work according to the stipulations of the Teachers’ Professional Code of Conduct (The Republic of Uganda, 2012).

With regard to this study, emphasis was put on ascertaining whether, in the pursuit of quality education, teachers are held accountable and whether this professional accountability affects their understanding of quality education as well as their classroom practices in the process of generating quality.

Regulation and compliance accountability

This form of accountability emphasises the need to adhere and conform to operating standards. This requires keeping records of pupils’ information and characteristics, as well as adherence to legal and planning policy guidelines such as having a school development plan, financial reporting, budgeting and maintaining a record on school assets and staff matters, implementation of the national curriculum, co-curricular



activities, pupils' behaviour and health-related practices. As the Department for Education (2017) describes, regulation compliance focuses on the teaching-learning process and general school outlook, which may vary depending on school type, resources available and school culture.

Overall, there has been an increased focus on accountability in the education sector reform agenda for effective public management. This has compelled the design of socially based accountability among the broader education reforms (Argon, 2015). These reforms have been meant to ensure the effective utilisation of resources as well as providing accountability to education stakeholders (Helgoy & Homme, 2016). An argument advanced to this effect has been that organisations' failure to include accountability systems in their operations will lead to gross uncertainties, irregularities as well as an unjust system and individual behaviours (Argon, 2015). This idea corroborates that of Eacott & Norris (2014) who observed that the ongoing accountability movement in education was born out of the pressing need to institutionalise accountability systems as a tool for improved school performance, especially students' academic performance in examinations (Maricle, 2014).

2.5.3 Quality education as accountability: The implications in a neoliberal discourse

Accountability thrives when it attracts, cherishes and incorporates the principles of responsibility and responsiveness in public servants' inherent actions (Bovens, 2010). Accordingly, individuals account for their actions in a manner that is self-initiated even in environments where standards are not explicit. The major challenge in the current accountability function is that it is regarded as both a goal and a tool for meeting educational standards in the current global educational reform movement (Gill, Lerner & Meosky, 2016). As Ross & Gibson (2006) mention, with neoliberal thinking, accountability standards aim at confining educators to a particular kind of thinking that envisages education as a tool for producing economically productive individuals who can perform certain tasks that conform to set standards, laws and procedures. This way, the natural accompaniment to work in a certain manner that the public approves of has greatly declined.



In a recent study by Hutchings (2015) conducted to assess the impact of accountability standards in England, the findings reveal that schools have become examination factories owing to the emphasis on academic standards. Quoting one of the primary teacher respondents, Hutchings (2015, p. 1) states:

“Everything is about test results; if it isn’t relevant to a test then it is not seen as a priority. This puts too much pressure on pupils, puts too much emphasis on academic subjects and creates a dull, repetitive curriculum that has no creativity. It is like a factory production line chugging out identical little robots with no imagination, already labelled as failures if they haven’t achieved the right level on a test”.

The study findings (Hutchings, 2015) revealed that accountability standards had instilled fear among education managers and, because they did not want their schools to be turned into academies, they had to do everything possible to ensure that their schools performed better. It was significantly observed that following the implementation of a standardised approach to meeting the standards, accountability standards had reduced teachers’ interactions with pupils, reduced the time for practical orientations and had made teaching dull. Accountability standards limit the goal of education to economic productivity, where learners must be able to contribute to the economy and the accumulation of wealth. I argue that accountability in practice should engage all those who are likely to be held accountable, both in setting the targets and the methods for accounting for results. Within the education context, this would imply input from teachers that would cater for their understanding and classroom practices.

As Bovens (2010) argues, the possibility of sanctions in the accountability function, though not their actual imposition, renders the person supposed to account non-committal in giving objective information. Alternatively, information is manipulated to fit the context in order to avoid the would-be sanctions. In fact, this has been the case in the neoliberal reform agenda in education. Hossain (2017) explains that, in Bangladesh, the government controls the examination standards and the curriculum centrally through the Directorate for Primary Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education respectively, with no engagement with the stakeholders such as education managers.



This has led to misalignment between the education goals set by the government and the implementers who do not seem to be aware of the intentions and how to work. Accordingly, Hossain (2017) argues that the requirement to account has led to frequent exams, which

“... have not only impacted students by bringing in an unhealthy competition but also led to an increasing practice of corruption in exams including question leakage, copying and other malpractices” (Hossain, 2017, pp. 3–4).

In view of this argument it is clear that overreliance on accountability standards in education cannot guarantee quality education. In fact, it is more likely that actors will find mechanisms to ensure that standards are met at the expense of holistic quality education. In cases of examination malpractice, there is the likelihood that pupils with the best grades cannot do not necessarily have matched levels of understanding. The negative effects of this will affect the final products at the end of the education cycle with half-baked graduates going into the field.

Argentina presents a different case, but still a failed accountability regime in education. As Salto (2017) observes, although there has been a move to decentralise education services to the federal governments, the national government shares the responsibility of managing education with the federal and provincial authorities. Owing to this governance system, the federal and provincial authorities are autonomous. In 1993, the Federal Education Council empowered them make decisions on the implementation of education policies with provisional ministries being held accountable for whatever educational results were generated. However, their decisions would not be binding, prompting the provincial governors to implement policies in their own which were very different from the Ministry of Education. Thus, accountability standards and frameworks are unclear, a situation that is exacerbated by structural constraints. To this effect, Harlen (2014) argues that there is a need for an effective communication system in which all the responsible centres and actors get to understand the need for a common position, as well as why they have to account and how. Lack of a clear communication structure, as in the case of Argentina, can lead to graduating learners from one level to



another with different levels of achievements and competences while still in the same county.

The current focus on accountability in education can be traced to the successive reform movements in America (Bunting, 1999; Hutchings, 2015; Ravitch, 2010; Resnick & Hall, 1998; Slavin, 1997), and especially to the declining scores in education (Ahearn, 2000) that led to the formation of the 1981 National Commission on Excellence in Education tasked with examining the quality of education in the United States. The release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* in April 1983 (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) elicited remarkable reactions that constituted an enhanced focus on the need to systematically account for the falling standards that were witnessed in the education sector at the time. This has over time resulted in the current global focus on educational standards and accountability (Louis, 1998). In England, the Education Reform Act (1988) and the subsequent Ofsted national testing and the published league table (Hutchings, 2015) have increased the need to hold educational stakeholders accountable.

Within the current neoliberal ideology, as Argon (2014), Maricle (2014), Eacott & Norris (2014), Ball (1994) put it, the state and corporations have put in place several accountability systems that indirectly control school operations from a distance through decentralised administration. School managers are given freedom but have to operate within clearly spelt out standards. The school's success is determined by how the standards have been adhered to. For example, the Ugandan government releases funds to support the UPE programme under the capitation grant, which is paid on the basis of the number of pupils per school, as well as a school facilities grant that is released for specific allocations. These allocations work as standardised accountability procedures that school managers must adopt. The local administrators at the district level, for example the chief accounting officers, district education officers and inspectors, ensure that allocations are followed and all funds are accounted for. Thereafter, they report to the MoES. In the case of the capitation grant, schools seek to maintain high numbers of pupils in a bid to attract more funds. Parents, on the other hand, want to send their children to schools that excel in the PLE. Teachers focus on ensuring that pupils pass the exams and this constitutes a clear accountability mechanism. However, as Sims (2017), Hutchings (2015), Argon (2015) and Walsh (2006) state, the type of teaching



that is measured by performance scores ends up compromising the overall quality of education, as teachers teach and focus on what can makes learners pass examinations.

Hursh (2001) argues that the accountability function in the education sector is a result of global neoliberal economic policies. A similar idea is advanced by Gill et al. (2016) highlighting the fact that owing to the wider effects education can bring to the economy, it has been used as a tool for policy shift. This concurs with what has been put forward by scholars such as Eacott & Norris (2014), Maricle (2014), Argon (2015) and, earlier, Puiggros (1999) that what we try to measure is how well the training provided by each school fits the needs of production and the labour market. This implies that schools aim at satisfying the market demands for the accountability function postulates such in a neoliberal discourse. What remains a concern for this study is that whereas accountability standards are put in place to improve performance, as O'Neill (2002), observes, overreliance on structural accountability mechanisms can end up undermining professional values and standards. This is confirmed by Hursh's (2001, p. 7) observation:

“Over the last decade the state has intruded into the lives of teachers and students to a degree unprecedented in history. Teachers are increasingly directed by district and school administrators to focus on raising test scores rather than teaching for understanding”.

The argument held in this study regarding education accountability is that accountability does not necessarily mean improved performance (Levitt et al., 2008). Pupils can produce high grades because the training is tailored to achieving these grades. Even when accountability procedures are clearly stipulated, targets may not be met. For example, in a study conducted by Transparency International (2013) with 210 primary schools in the Northern and Karamoja regions of Uganda revealed that all the schools were not managing the UPE funds properly, demonstrating a lack of basic financial and accounting knowledge. The report revealed that the lack of midday meals was partly contributing to high cases of school dropout. It is suggested that the government's policy of reducing public costs while increasing access to education is in line with the global neoliberal discourse, in which those who can afford the costs perform better and



those who cannot are held responsible for their failures, and has negatively affected the quality of education.

Levitt et al. (2008) argue that accountability in education is in danger of causing an accountability paradox in which the relationship that exists between the operational arrangements and performance may not necessarily be linear. Thus, placing more emphasis on accountability practices does not necessarily improve the quality of work and results. Borrowing from Jos & Tompkins (2004), Levitt et al. (2008) argue that the accountability paradox arises in instances when the interpretation and application of external accountability requirements is the responsibility of clearly designated agencies (such as inspectorates or auditors) whose own performance is assessed based on the levels to which those whom they inspect or audit comply with the set requirements. The procedures employed by the auditors and inspectors may be based on predetermined compliance variables that are at odds with the operational norms and practices of those who are audited. Formal accountability procedures equally negate the process and focus on the results, thereby omitting the teachers' understanding and classroom practices in the generation of quality education.

Gill et al. (2016) observe that excessive accountability demands result in an accountability dilemma and overload, with the former emerging from the different understandings of, and the varying definitions attached to, accountability that change over time, depending on why accountability is emphasised and to whom accountability must be made. In neoliberal economies, it is vital to recognise that with the demand and supply of education left to market forces, there are likely to be changing relationships that determine the best results. This agrees with Mulgan's (2000) observation that accountability has in recent times lost its former straightforwardness and apparently requires constant definition, classification and categorisation. Regarding the overload, in circumstances where multiple stakeholders have to be reported to, it can lead to a lack of evaluation criteria due to the presence of multiple stakeholders with varying vested interests and points of emphasis. This often results in an accountability overload, defined as the "*result of inadequate clarity between performance requirements or the contradictory obligations that they generate*" (Levitt et al., 2008, p. 15).



In a study conducted to explore the relationship between students' learning outcomes and accountability standards in Tanzania, Kombo (2017) revealed that much as accountability is highly documented in the national education programmes and policies, the failure to develop and institute clear accountability relationships and structures to streamline accountability at various education levels has been a factor in explaining students' poor learning outcomes. He argues that for accountability to improve learners' achievements, there is a need to institute clear structures for sharing performance-related information. Leaving the accountability function to the whims of the market forces and the competition function nullifies the moral edifice of educational accountability.

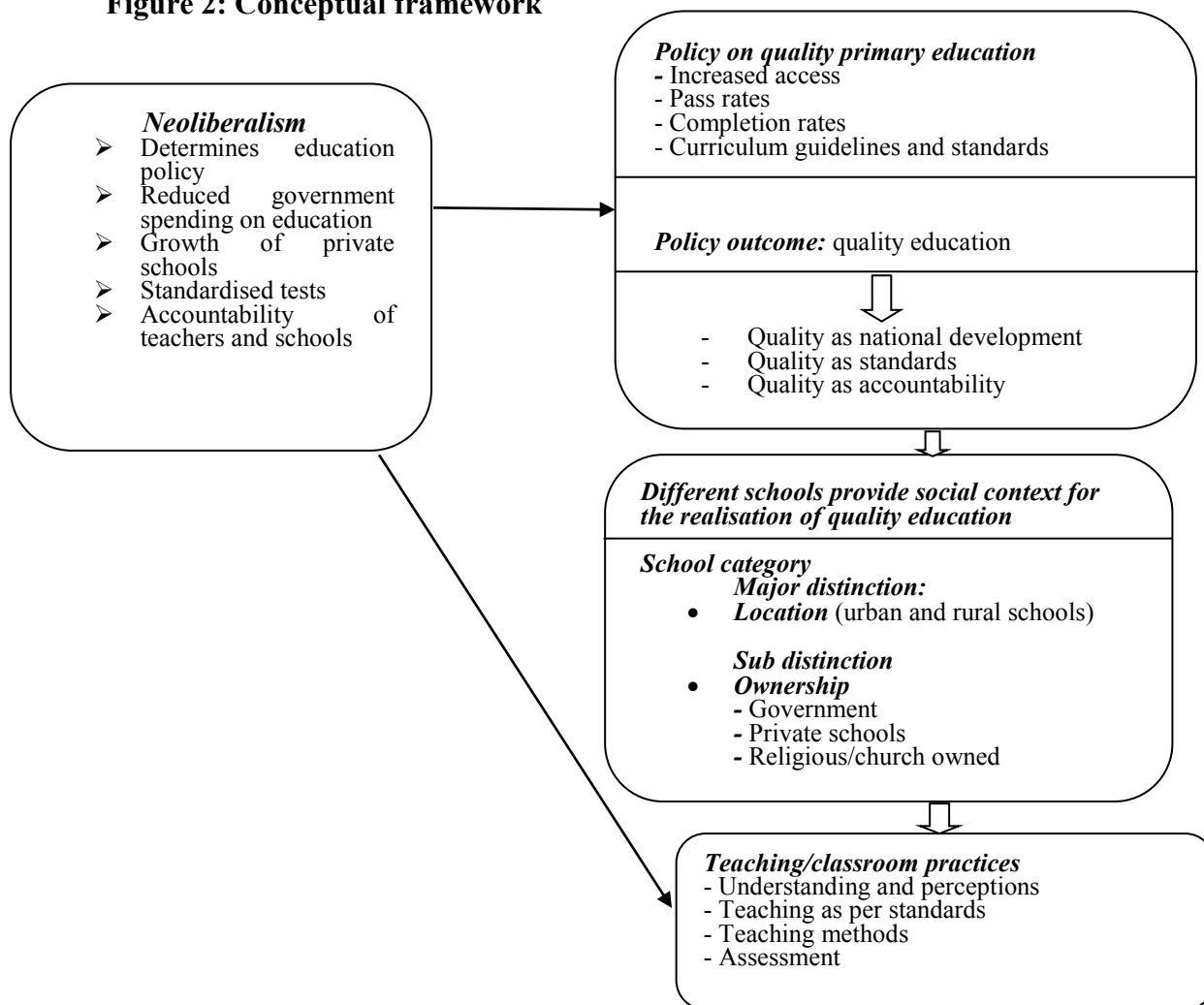
Overreliance on accountability and control is also a hindrance to the generation of quality in the provision of public services (Salto, 2015) including education. The widely applied sense of accountability in the education sector relies on the use of predetermined accountability standards that must be satisfied with the aim of meeting the interests and demands of superior officers, sometimes a panel of individuals to whom accountability must be made. This way, accountability works as a tool that fosters control, compliance and conformity. However, in the teaching-learning environment, this constrains creativity, innovativeness and modification of the processes to generate results that match the ever changing conditions in the environment as well as learner abilities and interests. Regarding this study, the vital point of concern was whether teachers who account for the performance of their pupils should be constrained by the education quality indicators without recognising the ever-changing demands made by the environment and the pupils' differing learning abilities which may require teachers to adapt their teaching methods.

2.5 Conceptual framework

According to Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 18), a conceptual framework “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, constructs or variables and the presumed relationship among them”, helps to generate meaningful data, as well as to come up with valid inferences. Indeed, this study adopted a conceptual framework to identify the relationship between teachers' understanding and their classroom practices on the one hand, and the quality of primary education on the other. This relationship guided the generation of data and the eventual analysis. The

interpretation and presentation of that findings were also done according to the emerging themes. This was guided by the initially held relationship among the study variables within the conceptual framework. The relationship among the study variables is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework



The conceptual framework depicts the fact that quality education in Ugandan primary schools has broadly been a concern of the neoliberalism ideology that has had an effect on the overall national policy orientation. Much as nations develop specific national policies designed to meet the national state goals, they are also influenced by the global market forces. For example, the Ugandan policy on education that emphasises increased access to education, pass rates, competition among schools and curriculum standards on which education managers are evaluated is strong inclined to the neoliberal reform agenda and, because of different contexts resulting from the free market operations, education quality is understood and implemented in different ways. For example, it is



clear from the literature review that quality education may be defined in terms of national development, standards and accountability. The meanings attached to these definitions are filtered and influenced by the school type, with the classroom practices of teachers as a primary focus of the implementation of quality education.

Overall, the current policy on quality education in Uganda has negatively affected the quality of primary education. For example, the focus on increased access has firstly led to the liberalisation of the education sector, allowing private education providers to gain access to the market. Driven by the need to make profits, they concentrate on teaching that ensures that learners get the best grades so as to improve the schools' public image and attract more pupils. Similarly, there are variations in the teaching-learning process, where aspects that are not examined at the end of the primary school cycle are neglected. Secondly, the focus on completion rates has compelled government to come up with the automatic promotion policy, arguing that this allows costs that would have been incurred through repetition of classes to be reduced. This has resulted in pupils completing the primary education cycle when they do not have the required competences. Thirdly, with the government's steady withdrawal from the education sector, conditions of learning in government-aided schools have deteriorated. There are insufficient resources for effective school management and items such as lunch, instructional materials, classrooms and teachers' welfare have been hard hit. Consequently, some parents who are able to afford it take their children to private schools where conditions for learning are better. Those who are unable to raise the money for private schools, keep their children in government-aided schools where learning conditions are poor and where pupils have less chance academic success. Education has become a good whose access is determined by the buyer's or seeker's ability to meet the cost.

The argument in this study is that the current discourse on quality education is a result of a neoliberal ideology that aims at producing individuals fit to compete in the globalised market economy. To effect this, arguing increased access to education, government has opened up avenues to the private sector to provide education. This has led to an increase in the growth and development of private schools. However, the government has kept its central role of setting the standards such as the standardised scores on which quality is measured. Individual schools and learners are held



responsible for not meeting these standards. Hence, the teaching process tends to focus on how pupils can excel, based on the standardised scores. The fact that such standards are set without considering teachers' understanding and classroom practices poses questions regarding how they generally teach for the purposes of generating quality education. Interactions with classroom teachers revealed that in the quest for success, each teacher strives to ensure that the best grades are realised. With this focus, the conceptual framework provided a basis upon which the quality of primary education could be assessed by considering teachers' understanding and classroom practices. For example, although teachers have a rich understanding of quality education, the actual classroom practices must be in conformity with the national standards, as well as the schools' specific operational policies, which are shaped by the nature and category of the school. The drawing of inferences in this study and therefore the proposed model have all been informed by the relationship that was initially held at the conceptualisation stage of this study.

2.6 Summary

There have been several attempts to define the concept of quality education. From the definitions provided in the literature, this study focused on three: quality as national development, quality as standards and quality as accountability. Quality as national development focuses on the goal of education, quality as standards focuses on what is used (indicators) to ascertain that quality education has been achieved, while quality as accountability focuses on the proof that institutions can use to justify that standards have been achieved. It is important to note that, globally, the notion of quality education is shaped by trends in global and international education policy that have been influenced by the neoliberal discourse of the last three decades. The goal of education has become focused on creating individuals who can compete in the marketplace. To effect this, the state retains her legitimacy by setting education standards but leaves the daily implementation function to the market forces. Accountability procedures are subsequently strengthened to ensure that individual schools are held responsible if they fail to meet the standards. The current Ugandan policy on quality education in primary schools, with its focus on quality education indicators such as pass rates and completion rates, and the significant reduction in government expenditure on education, while setting academic standards and holding schools accountable for poor performance, signify Uganda's adoption of neoliberal thinking.



It should be noted that as global and national policies change, the understanding of quality education changes too. In all this, teachers are deemed to facilitate the teaching-learning process by ensuring that the set targets are achieved. However, as the literature and Ugandan policy on quality education reveal, teachers' understanding and actual classroom practices have been neglected in the attempt to generate quality education. The policy formulation process, in which the curriculum that articulates what should be taught, when it should be taught, how to teach it and how to assess learners, is a top-down process. Teachers are never consulted but are expected to implement and meet the set performance standards. They are also held accountable for standards that they barely understand. This study, therefore, was intended to find out how teachers' understanding and classroom practices affect the quality of primary education.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, an attempt was made to review the literature related to the study. This was synthesised into three constructs: quality education as national development, quality education as standards and quality education as accountability. This chapter aligns the presentation to the research questions that guided the study: (i) How do teachers perceive policies related to quality education? (ii) How do teachers practise quality education in their classrooms? and (iii) Why according to them do they practise quality education in the ways they do? It also discusses the approach and methods that were used to generate the data.

For the purposes of answering the research questions, a well-structured approach and methods were critical for the purposes of generating data. This chapter, therefore, presents the way in which the data were generated and meaningful interpretations were made. The chapter begins by discussing the adopted research philosophy and how it informed the approach, paradigm and research design. The chapter also discusses the sample selection methods and size, tools for data collection, ethical consideration, trustworthiness, delimitation of the study and how the data were analysed. This chapter is also presented in a manner that aligns it to the nature of the study and the research questions (what and how questions) that clearly illustrates case study design as the most appropriate design.

3.2 Philosophy of research

The term philosophy in research refers to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge (Chetty, 2016), and research is a well-structured and organized endeavor that aims to inquire into the study of any phenomenon (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Research is founded on philosophical assumptions, which are related to the researcher's view or perception of what reality is. According to Creswell (2007), there are five philosophical assumptions that can guide research undertakings and these are: ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical and methodology. Each element uniquely determines the design in carrying out research as each influences what and how we can understand the social world and the



tribulations it faces (Creswell, Plano & Clark, 2007). In the attempt to decide over the philosophical assumption to use, I adopted Creswell (2007) classification of philosophical assumptions based on the characteristics and implications for practice as summarized in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Philosophical assumptions with implications for practice

Assumption	Question	Characteristics	Implications for practice (example)
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in the study.	Researcher uses quotes and themes in words of participants and provides evidence of different perspectives.
Epistemological	What is the relationship between research and that being researched?	Researcher attempts to lessen distance between himself/herself and that being researched.	Researcher collaborates, spends time in the field with participants and becomes an “insider”.
Axiology	What is the role of values?	Researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden and that biases are present.	Researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes his own interpretation in conjunction with the interpretation of participants.
Rhetorical	What is the language of research?	Researcher writes in a literary, informal style using the personal voice and uses qualitative terms and limited definitions.	Researcher uses an emerging style of narrative, may use first person pronoun, and employs the language of qualitative research.
Methodological	What is the process of research?	Researcher uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context and uses an emerging design.	Researcher works with particulars (details) before generalizations, describes in detail the context of the study, and continually revises questions from experience in the field.

Source: Creswell (2007, p.17).

The topic under investigation (Teachers’ understanding and classroom practices of quality education in Ugandan primary education), and the nature of the research questions: (i) how do teachers perceive policies related to quality education?, (ii) how do teachers practice quality education in the classrooms? and (iii) why according to them do they practice quality education in the ways they do?) could best be studied and



answered by generating teachers' views regarding their understanding and classroom practice in the generation of quality education that is context specific. This was contextualised with regard to the existing quality education policies as well the school category. This necessitated using the ontological philosophy, which postulates that reality is subjective and socially constructed by participants in different contexts. This study, therefore, was guided by the ontological philosophy that equally influenced the study approach, paradigm, data collection tools, data analysis and interpretation.

3.3 The study approach and paradigm

According to Creswell (2014), there are three approaches to research, namely: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Within the qualitative domain, the research process involves emerging questions and procedures, data is typically collected in the participants' setting, data analysis is inductively built from particulars to general themes as the researcher makes interpretations of the meaning in the data. Proponents and those who use this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation vital in making sense out of the data.

Quantitative research on the other hand, as Creswell (2014) puts, is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. Bryman (2012, p. 35) defined quantitative research as, "*A research strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of data...*" This implies that quantitative research heavily deals with explaining what amounts to something and aims to generate answers to questions starting with how many, how much and to what extent (Rasinger, 2013). Those who engage in quantitative research have assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings. However, the approach exhibits some challenges, namely: First, quantitative research leaves out the common meanings of social phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) and fails to uncover deeper underlying meanings and explanations. Focus is put on making



inferences based on the most occurring elements. For example, the Bouwer, Béguin, Sanders & van den Bergh's study (2015) measured the effect of genre on writing score involving various types of variance such as person, genre, person by genre, task within genre, person by task within genre, raters who rated tasks within different genres, and random error. But the study does not explain the reasons of the effect and their meanings in that particular context, something that calls for the understanding of individual beliefs and perceptions that can be exploited in the qualitative domain.

Secondly, as Blaikie (2007) argues, quantitative research fails to account for how the social reality is shaped and maintained, or how people interpret their actions and others. This is best explained by exploring social reality that is socially constructed through peoples' actions, meanings and the linguistic construction of words people use; a domain of qualitative research. A further weakness of quantitative research approach is that it has tendencies of taking a snapshot of a phenomenon: it measures variables at a specific moment in time and disregards the embedded intentions of certain behaviors and actions (Schofield, 2007; Fidalgo, Alavi & Amirian, 2014). Focus is put on testing statistical significance but leaves out the deeper meaning regarding the value-loaded perceptions that participants inherently possess over certain actions.

On the other hand, mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry that involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The central foundation of mixed methods approach to research is that "the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" Creswell & Clark (2007, p. 5).

Creswell (2003) has categorized six mixed method variations of data collection and analysis. First, the sequential explanatory strategy collects and analyzes quantitative data followed by collection and analysis of qualitative data. Second, the sequential exploratory strategy collects and analyzes qualitative data followed by collection and analysis of quantitative data (Selden, 2005). Third, the sequential transformative strategy provides for data collection and analysis of either type of data before



combining the data during the interpretation phase of the study. This methodology is guided by a theoretical perspective. Fourth, the concurrent triangulation strategy collects data concurrently and tries to “confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 217). Fifth, the concurrent nested strategy collects both data types concurrently and embeds one methodology within a more predominant method. The researcher may address different questions from the hierarchical question ladder when applying this methodology. Sixth, the concurrent transformative strategy collects each type of data concurrently and combines the findings during the analysis phase of the study.

Given the nature of the topic, (Teachers’ understanding and classroom practices of quality education in Ugandan primary education) together with the research questions (how do teachers perceive policies related to quality education?, how do teachers practice quality education in the classrooms? and why according to them do they practice quality education in the ways they do?), this study opted for, and adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative approaches are dominantly used to explore new phenomena and to capture and explain individuals’ thoughts, feelings and/or interpretations of meaning and process (Given, 2008). The research questions for this study could best be answered by generating views regarding teachers’ understanding, practices and lived experiences regarding how quality education is generated in specific primary school contextual realities. This occasioned the use of qualitative research with tools that allowed for the generation of data through open ended interviews and classroom observations in which more data could be generated by interesting participants in more questions during the research process. The uniqueness of participants’ ideas, based on different individual standpoints and schools’ specific contextual realities were critical in data interpretation.

As Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston (2013, p. 4) stress, qualitative research and qualitative approaches have the following inherent characteristics as indicated in the caption hereafter.



- Aims and objectives that are directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world or research participants by learning about the sense they make of their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories.
- The use of non-standardised, adaptable methods of data generation that are sensitive to the social context of the study and can be adapted for each participant or case to allow the exploration of emerging issues.
- Data that are detailed, rich and complex.
- Openness to emergent categories and theories at the analysis and interpretation stage.
- Outputs that include detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being researched, grounded in the perspectives and accounts of participants.
- A reflexive approach, where the role and perspective of the researcher in the research process is acknowledged.
- Analysis that retains complexity and nuance and respects the uniqueness of each participant or case, as well as recurrent, cross-cutting themes.

Based on these features, every idea of participants was treated uniquely as a source of new information. My duty as a researcher was to interpret the associated meanings without any form of predisposition but rather assessing merit based on the internal embedded meanings.

It should be noted however, that much as qualitative research approach has a number of advantages, it ought to be noted that the approach has some limitations. For example as Ochieng (2009) argues, the main disadvantage of qualitative approaches to analysis is that the findings cannot be generalized to wider populations with the same degree of certainty compared with quantitative research. This is due to the fact that findings under qualitative research approach are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance. To guard against this, trustworthiness of the study findings was catered for by ascertaining the findings' credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (details in section 3.9).

Given the nature of qualitative research and the fact that the study had to utilise the data to explain the understanding and practice of quality education, an interpretivist paradigm was found to be appropriate in guiding the study.



Interpretive paradigm assumes that reality, which is socially constructed, can be realised through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. This involves understanding the fact that human beings make sense of their experiences in the world and attach meaning to their practices. In doing so, their understanding influence what they do and how they do it.

Interpretivist researchers maintain that understanding the world is determined by understanding the world of human experiences (Cohen & Manion, 1994). As argued by Nguyen & Tran (2015), Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2011) and Creswell (2003), in interpretive research the reality is discovered by understanding and interpreting views, backgrounds and experiences of participants. In this study, teachers' understanding of quality education and their classroom practices, influenced by a number of context-specific characteristics, were examined in detail.

One of the major foundations of an interpretivist paradigm is the belief that the context in which a research project is grounded (Willis, 2007), together with the words and practices that people use and hold in a given context, is critical to the overall interpretation of the collected data.

An interpretive philosophy also holds that understanding in the social sciences differs from explanations in the natural sciences. Interpretivists argue that the social sciences are concerned with the qualitative, in which there is a need to treat the people we study as human beings and we should endeavour to reach out to them to gain an understanding of their experiences and perceptions by listening to and observing their actions. Peoples' experiences and values are context bound and, thus, generalisations without taking into consideration people's understanding and practices may lead to the misrepresentation of reality and how it is constructed. For interpretivist researchers, *"reality is not out there as an amalgam of external phenomenon waiting to be uncovered as facts, but a construct in which people understand reality similarly, but this does not diminish the potential for reality to be construed differently"* (Briggs et al., 2012, p. 20).

Thus, despite the presence of standards for the generation of quality education, the study found it necessary to uncover whether such standards were followed and whether there



were other forms of human understanding, behaviour, practice and action that affected the generation of quality education.

As Bhattacharjee (2012) argues, the use of an interpretivist paradigm in research is justified by the following features: First, a theoretical sampling strategy must be used to select the research sites. Interpretive research employs a theoretical sampling strategy “where study sites, respondents, or cases are selected on the basis of theoretical considerations such as whether they fit the phenomenon being studied, whether they possess certain characteristics that make them uniquely fit for the study and so forth” (Bhattacharjee 2012, p. 104). Indeed, the selection of the district and the participants was based on theoretical orientations, for example the focus on classroom teachers was guided by the fact that they are the ones who implement the education interventions and thus have to have a good understanding of the standards emphasised in the teaching-learning process.

Secondly, the researcher’s role is critical in interpretive research. The researcher participates in data generating and, thus, interpretation depends on how he/she has perceived the meaning of the participants’ actions. Throughout the data collection exercise and during the analysis, all ideas generated were value-laden. I therefore had to provide a thorough interpretation of each response by considering a number of factors such as the school category, the location, the classes and subjects taught and the environment in which the participants work.

Thirdly, interpretive research is holistic and contextual. Interpretations are focused on signs, language and meanings from the perspective of the participants. To take care of this characteristic, the study was conducted in a district whose local language I understand so as not to miss certain linguistic meanings, especially during classroom observations, since some lessons observed were conducted in the local language.

Fourthly, researchers become immersed in the contextual reality they are trying to study. The relationship between the researcher and the participant becomes close during the data generating process. This was galvanised by the face-to-face interviews that employed open-ended questions which increased the rapport levels between the



researcher and participants. The use of classroom observations also enhanced the researcher's ability to clearly understand the contextual realities.

Finally, data collection and analysis go hand in hand and are iterative until the study ends. This feature was adhered to throughout the research process. Analysis involved backward forward reflections on the basis of each and every interview and each and every day.

This study exhibited all the features in the foregoing list and, therefore, qualified to use interpretivist paradigm. This study was anchored in the logic that “knowing and knowledge surpass basic empirical investigation, hence, putting focus on human interpretations of the social world and the significance of both participants’ and the investigator’s interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon being studied” (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 11, borrowing from Kant, 1981).

In order to understand the various constructs of quality education to which the literature alludes, the interpretation and perceptions of teachers and head teachers who participate in the process of generating quality education were the primary source of information. Teachers’ classroom practices are influenced by their understanding and interpretations of the circumstances they experience, the standards the government sets to measure educational achievement as well as how to account for their (teachers’) actions.

The information regarding teachers’ understanding of quality education and their classroom practices was interpreted from the data collected via detailed interviews, observation of teachers’ classroom practices and how they implement quality throughout the entire teaching-learning process. Accordingly, this study used qualitative methods which were informed by an interpretivist philosophy – interpretivism in the sense that the primary concern was “how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced ... focusing upon social meanings, or interpretations, or practices, or discourses, or processes, or constructions, *or perceptions or gains* ... as meaningful elements in a complex, possibly multi-layered world” [Italics added] (Mason, 1996, p. 4).



3.4 Research design

A study design is a plan that articulates the whole process of organising and undertaking a research activity, starting from problem conceptualisation to writing structuring research questions and the subsequent data collection in a manner that guarantees the realisation of the overall research aim. A research design is *“the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions”* (Yin, 2003, p. 20). This study adopted a case study design which is founded under the qualitative research camp.

According to Creswell (2007, p. 73), Yin (2003, p. 20) and Gerring (2004), a case study as a form of empirical research has the following outstanding features: First, it is an inquiry in which the researcher aims to studying a bounded system; a case, for example a nation-state, evolution, political party or an individual person or multi-bounded systems (cases) (Gerring, 2004). Secondly, One aims to investigating a current phenomenon within its contextualised real-life (setting), especially when frontiers between phenomenon and context are not plainly manifested, “fuzzy around the edges” (Gerring, 2004, p. 346). Thirdly, the investigator makes context an important factor in the research problem to answer “how” and “why” questions (Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2003). Fourthly, the investigator probes deeply by using detailed and in-depth data collection methods and tools. This also calls for reaching out to multiple sources of context specific data such as using observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, present status or whatever can influence change or growth over time (Amin, 2005).

This study was considered to have had all the features to qualify it for case study design. In the first instance, Uganda as an independent nation-state has its own sovereignty, control and power with unique systems that temper and guide the operational culture, rules and governance structures. The education policies constitute the norms that constrain and determine the national education orientations, including the standards for qualifying quality education. How teachers perceive quality in Ugandan primary education and how they practise it in the classrooms affect the quality of education generated. Still, case studies vary. According to Yin (2003), there are four types of case study as depicted in the matrix hereafter.



	Single Case Design	Multiple Case Design
<i>Holistic (single unit of analysis)</i>	Type 1	Type 3
<i>Embedded (multiple units of analysis)</i>	Type 2	Type 4

Source: Yin (2003, p. p. 39)

The horizontal logic of the matrix represents the number of cases to be used while the vertical alignment shows the unit of analysis – either as a whole (holistic and bounded system) or embedded (within cases of the whole). Gerring (2004) advances akin typology of co-variation on a temporal and spatial basis. This study fits well within the type 2 case study design as per Yin’s typology with a single instrumental case of Uganda at a national level but with embedded units of analysis that constituted the different schools. The within cases are made up of the sub-units which lie at a lower level of analysis relative to the inference made under investigation – which constitutes the foundation of the unit of analysis.

The study adopted a case study design. This choice was based on its primary aim which was guided by the nature of the research questions that were set to understand how teachers’ understanding and classroom practices affect the quality of primary education. This required an understanding of the context and process (Gillham, 2000), thus calling for a case study design. According to Briggs et al. (2012, p. 157), “*case study research entails being where the action is, taking testimony from and observing the actors first hand*” in an environment over which the researcher has no control. The study focused on the classroom practices of teachers as contemporary events (Yin, 1994) which are influenced by the categories of schools as well as the operational context-specific environments, largely influenced by both the national and school-specific policies. A case study, therefore, helped to depict the different contextual realities in a bid to explain quality in primary education in terms of different school categories. The understanding of quality education, and the process of generating it with regard to classroom practices, constituted the study’s focus.



3.5 Location of the study

Uganda is located in East Africa, about 800 kilometres from the Indian Ocean, and straddles the equator. It is a landlocked country bordered by Kenya, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania in the east, north, west, southwest and south respectively. The country has a total area of 241,551 square kilometres of which 200,523 square kilometres is land and 41,028 square kilometres is water. The country is inhabited by 34.6 million persons as per the 2014 National Census (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Uganda is predominantly an agricultural country with agriculture contributing over 80% of the gross domestic product (GDP).

The study was conducted in Bushenyi district, which is situated in the Western region of Uganda. It is bordered by the districts of Rubirizi, Buhwezu, Sheema, Mitooma and Rukungiri in the northwest, northeast, east, south and west respectively, with coordinates of 00 32S, 30 11E.

3.5.1 Selection of the district and schools

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, there are six categories of primary schools in Uganda (MoES, 2013). This categorisation is based on (i) ownership, with government owned and privately owned schools, (ii) founding bodies and funding sources (religiously founded, community founded and government founded), (iii) boarding status (day, half-boarding and pure boarding schools), (iv) location (rural, peri-urban and urban schools), (v) legal status (registered and non-registered), and (vi) distance from the DEO (near and far) particularly as regards the inspection, monitoring and accountability function. These categories of schools are all guided by the UPE policy with its vital stipulations in respect of quality education. Given these primary school categories, all the districts with both rural and urban characteristics could qualify for the study. Thus, the 29 districts that have a municipality status would have qualified for the study. These include Arua, Bushenyi, Busia, Wakiso, Fotportal, Gulu, Hoima, Iganga, Jinja, Kabale, Kasese, Lira, Masaka, Masindi, Mbale, Mbarara, Moroto, Ntungamo, Mukono, Rukungiri, Soroti, Tororo, Kisoro, Mityana, Kitgum, Ibanda, Koboko, Mubende and Kumi.

Following the proposal review by the Mildmay Uganda Research and Ethics Committee (MUREC), it was recommended that I should select a district with inhabitants who



speak a language that I have a better understanding of. The intention of this recommendation was to help me understand the linguistic construction of the local languages given the fact that lower primary classes are taught in the local languages. Accordingly, Bushenyi district was conveniently selected for the study. This was in line with Edwards & Holland's (2013) argument that qualitative academic researchers often favour convenience sampling especially in terms of accessibility. The researcher hails from Bushenyi district and envisaged that the data collection exercise could be smoothly coordinated since he was more conversant with the local language in that district than any other. Convenience sampling was used because it is a sampling method in which cases are selected that possess the unique characteristics of the subject under investigation (Patton, 1990).

At the proposal development stage I had envisaged visiting all categories of schools. However, the protocol review committee (MUREC) pointed out that there would be overlaps, for example cases where a rural or urban religious/church funded school would have both boarders and day scholars. To avoid this overlap, MUREC recommended that the study to adopt one broad categorisation of ownership, thus: (i) government-owned schools, (ii) religious/church-owned and (iii) privately-owned schools. For the purposes of rural and urban comparisons, it was also recommended that a rural and an urban school be selected for each category. Accordingly, six schools in total were involved in the study.

3.5.2 Description of the sample

Kent primary school is a government-aided rural primary school started in the early 1980s. The school lies about 35 kilometres from the Bushenyi district headquarters along the Ishaka-Kasese highway. The school has 434 pupils and 11 teachers of whom seven are government paid and four are paid using funds from parents' contributions. The school makes no provision for pupils' lunches. The school has one house that is able to accommodate two teachers. The rest of the teachers rent houses from the nearby trading centre. In terms of academic performance, the school rarely gets any pupil into division one.

Reality primary school is a typical urban school started and run on a private basis. It is located two kilometres from the district headquarters. The school has 1800 pupils, 400



of whom are in the nursery section while 1400 are in the primary section. It has a boarding section accommodating over 1000 primary-level pupils. The school has a total of 85 teachers and sufficient classrooms, with each class having five streams. All teachers are provided for in terms of accommodation and lunch. The school performs well in the national examinations with all pupils in division one. In the 2017 PLE, it had the best results of all the schools in the country.

Radox is a typical rural school started by the Church of Uganda but later taken over by the central government during the process of nationalisation education institutions, mainly because of the financial constraints experienced in managing those schools. The school is about 45 kilometres from the district headquarters along the Ishaka-Kasese highway and is housed next to a church. The school has seven teachers, of which five are government paid while two are paid using local parent contributions. The school has 250 pupils and no provision is made for lunch. The school structures are in a dire state of repair with unplastered walls and one latrine which is shared by both pupils and teachers. The school's academic performance is equally bad with no pupil having performed in division one since 2010.

Reality primary school is a typical government-aided urban school, located a kilometre from the district headquarters. It has a population of 985 pupils of whom 700 are housed in the boarding section. The school has a total of 17 teachers of whom 11 are paid by the government and six by parents. The school has a boarding section which accommodates 800 pupils. Although it is a government supported school, the operations are similar to those of private schools with each pupil paying school fees higher even than private schools. Teachers are provided for in terms of accommodation and lunch. The school lacks sufficient classrooms, with streams of over 65 pupils. The school's academic performance is good with over 70% of pupils passing in division one every year.

Glad primary school is also an urban school situated within the municipality and founded by the Church of Uganda. It is located about a kilometre from the district headquarters. The school has 131 pupils and nine teachers, of whom three are paid by parents. The school makes no provision for teachers' houses and lunch. The school's academic performance is poor with no pupils passing in division one since 2013.



Kids Cross primary school is a typical rural school managed in terms of a private arrangement. The school is located about 60 kilometres from the district headquarters and has 254 pupils and 11 teachers. The school supplies accommodation to six teachers and more houses are under construction. It is a day school and pupils are provided with lunch. The school has been in existence for four years with a record of improved performance as the number of pupils in division one keeps on increasing.

3.5.3 Selection of respondents

In each of the six primary schools selected, three class teachers and a head teacher were selected for the study. The selection of teachers followed the Ugandan primary education levels which are scaled down into the following: (a) Lower primary, which contains three classes – primary one, primary two and primary three. The selection of a teacher for interviews was done using simple random sampling, (b) Middle primary, which consist of only primary four. The selection of a teacher was done purposively and (c) Upper primary, which consists of primary five, primary six and primary seven. The selection of one teacher for interviews was done using simple random sampling.

The selection of a teacher whose lesson was observed was also done using simple random sampling, excluding teachers who had been selected for interviews. The lottery method was used for each level. Accordingly, each class was written on a piece of paper that was folded and put in a box. One piece of paper was then picked at random. The class selected would thus determine the class teacher to be interviewed. The use of simple random sampling offered all teachers an equal chance of being included in the study (Alvi, 2016; Turner, 2010).

Purposive sampling was used to select the primary four class teacher and the head teacher. Purposive sampling is a technique used in naturalistic studies aimed at selecting institutions, individuals and groups of individuals whose engagement can help answer an identified research question (Briggs et al., 2012; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In this regard, typical case sampling was employed based on the aim of the study and the fact that teachers' classroom practices constitute a behaviour that teachers should exhibit (Briggs et al., 2012). Thus, the study focused on cases that were thought to give the most reliable information about the subject of the study. In this case, classroom teachers and head teachers were appropriate



for giving information on how teachers’ understanding and classroom practices affect the quality of primary education. Their lived experiences and understanding were therefore critical in informing the study. This enhanced the transferability of results. For example, given another context, classroom teachers would still constitute a sample category that could provide realistic answers to research question, such as How do teachers understand policies related to quality education? How do teachers practise quality education in the classrooms? and Why according to teachers do they practise quality education in the way they do? A summary of the selection methods is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Selection of respondents for interviews per school visited

Levels per school	Classes in the level	Respondents	Sampling method
(a) Open-ended Interview			
Lower primary level	P1, P2 and P3	01	Simple random sampling
Middle primary level	P.4	01	Purposive sampling
Upper primary level	P5, P6 and P7	01	Simple random sampling
Head teacher	One for the entire school	01	Purposive sampling
(b) Non-Participant observations			
One teacher across the three levels	One per school excluding interview participants	01	Simple random sampling
Total		05	

All the selected respondents were appropriate for elucidating how teachers’ teaching and instructional methods affect the entire process of generating quality education throughout the primary education cycle. In all, a total of 30 participants (six head teachers and 24 teachers) were involved in the study. These participants were deemed to possess sufficient knowledge on the subject under investigation. For example, the classroom teachers implement education quality standards in the classroom while head teachers provide the leadership and direction as regards the education plans in each school.



3.6 The research process

The data collection exercise was not linear and involved a number of episodes (Maree, 2015) with some overlapping. Maree points out four generic processes that can be followed in conducting a study, namely: (i) determining and developing data collection tools and participants, (ii) assessing the tools, which focuses on evaluating their feasibility, (iii) adjusting the tools, which may call for action like refining, changing, replacing and even deleting and (iv) reflection, which involves documenting the lessons learnt to avoid similar flaws. I adopted these steps to pre-test the tools and they also formed part of the process conducted by Mildmay Uganda Research and Ethics Committee (MURE) for ethical clearance in the country where the study was conducted.

Before obtaining the ethical clearance certificate from MUREC, a pilot study was conducted in a district with similar characteristics to the one where the study was finally conducted. A rural and an urban school were purposively selected for this purpose. In each school the head teacher was purposively selected while the classroom teachers were selected using simple random sampling. Preliminary results were shared with MUREC and the following suggestions were made for refining the tools.

(i) Head teachers' interview guide

Question 1: The question initially read: *Can you explain to me your understanding of quality primary education?* The question was changed to: *Can you share with me your understanding of quality primary education?*

The pilot test experience indicated that participants appeared reluctant and showed some hesitation in answering, with the way in which the question was expressed being too direct and demanding.

Question 2: This question initially read: *How would you describe the trend of quality in primary education in the last 10 years?* It was changed to: *How would you describe the trend of quality education in this school and the country for the last five years?* The initial question was not sufficiently specific in terms of the geographical confines and required clarity before a participant could answer. It was subsequently felt that ten years was not too long for someone to recall. And since the study would also analyse



documents, the researcher was advised to shorten the interviews and capture the details when analysing school documents.

Question 12: *Can you explain how pupils are promoted from one level to another? (Probe to find out the effectiveness levels thereof)* and

Question 14: *How effective is the criterion for promoting pupils from one class to the next* were found to give similar responses. Question 14 was thus omitted.

(ii) Teachers' interview guide

Question one was addressed in the same way as the head teachers' interview guide

Question 5: Initially read: *How do you rate the effectiveness of these methodologies? Please explain* and

Question 6: *To what extent do you allow pupils to participate while you are teaching? Please explain.* As question five captured responses that were expected in question six, question six was dropped.

Question 9: *How is the assessment of pupils in primary schools conducted?* and
Question 10: *Who oversees and conducts the pupil assessment process?* The two questions were found to be challenging for participants to differentiate. Question 10 was eventually dropped because in explaining how assessment is conducted, respondents would obviously mention the person in charge.

Question 13: Formerly, the question was: *Would you like teachers to participate in setting education quality standards? Please explain.*

Question 14: *What is the current practice of setting education standards in terms of consultations and participation?* The two questions were merged to form: *What is the current practice of setting education standards in terms of teacher consultations and participation?*

Throughout the pilot study, I found myself torn between asking questions, listening and jotting down the main points. In the final phase of data collection, I resorted to recording (apart from two participants who did not want to be recorded), since in this way I would have all the details at the end of the interview. I also realised that the



exercise would require much more time than initially anticipated, as an in-depth interview could not be completed in just 40 minutes as initially targeted. I equally realised that I needed to master the flow of questions so that I did not need to refer to the interview guide all the time. This helped me ascertain and come up with a sequence of the questions in a manner that appeared natural and compelling. The final phase of data collection benefited from these reflections.

I used a cohesive multi-method approach (Yin, 2011) in generating the data. First, I used face-to-face interviews owing to their advantage they hold in bringing the researcher closer to the participants. I also observed classroom lessons in their ideal setting. Participants were not notified prior to the observations and, thus, no preparations were made that would influence the observed phenomenon. A document review was also conducted. Section 3.6 provides a detailed account of how the final data collection exercise was conducted.

3.7 Research methods and tools

In this section, I explain in detail of how the data were generated and provide a justification for each method and tool used in the study.

3.7.1 Interview method

I used open-ended interviews as the main data collection method. As Maree (2015) emphasises, evidence in cases studies is generally gathered by means of interviews, which are a vital source of data. In an attempt to conduct a purposeful dialogue with the study participants (Briggs et al., 2012; Yin, 2014) and to grasp their point of view and their personal accounts as actors in their unique localities, resulting from their positions and roles (Creswell, 2013; Maruster & Gijzenburg, 2013; Turner, 2010), open-ended interviews were deemed an appropriate method of generating data. Interviews are also an appropriate method for use in the field of educational leadership and management because of their leverage to a natural flow of the interview in a cordial but purposeful manner. This enhances dialogue between the investigator and the participant (Maree, 2015).

I conducted twenty-four face-to-face interviews with the participants using an interview guide (Appendices II and III). The twenty-four interviews were deemed sufficient, and helped generate sufficient data to inform the drawing of inferences. More so, choosing a



sample of 24 participants for interviews helped the researcher to collect detailed data (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbon, 2015, Yin, 2014). As Maree (2015) argues, whereas there is usually preference for a small, rich sample to enable in-depth study of the phenomenon in qualitative studies, there are levels of data saturation where more information becomes difficult to analyse. Such a point was reached, implying that enough data had been collected. Table 3.3 shows the details of the 24 participants that were interviewed from each school together with their positions.

Table 3.3: Participants interviewed

Schools	Participants involved in the study
Kent Primary School	Deputy head teacher
	Class teacher primary four
	Class teacher primary two
	Class teacher primary five
Radox Primary School	Deputy head teacher
	Class teacher primary four
	Class teacher primary five
	Class teacher primary two
Merit Primary School	Head teacher
	Class teacher primary four
	Class teacher primary five
	Class teacher primary one
Reality Primary School	Head teacher
	Class teacher primary four
	Class teacher primary six
	Class teacher primary two
Glad Primary School	Head teacher
	Class teacher primary six
	Class teacher primary five
	Class teacher primary three
Kids Cross Primary School	Head teacher
	Class teacher primary four
	Class teacher primary two
	Class teacher primary six

For this qualitative study, a highly flexible interview guide was used (Edwards & Holland, 2013) with the flow of the questions not strictly following a predetermined structure during the interviewing process. Throughout the interview, focus was put on the understanding of quality education, how teachers implement quality in the classroom and why they implement quality in particular ways. The decisions during interviews were guided by the nature of the study, especially the research questions and the philosophy adopted (interpretivism). Given the nature of the study and the rigour



required for understanding the social construction of reality from participants' understanding and practices, the need to generate in-depth data benefited greatly from the use of an interview guide.

Face-to-face interviews were used because they allowed the interviewer to make judgements about interactive signs and interpret the meanings of such signs (Briggs et al., 2012). In addition, interviews helped generate detailed data, especially as probing was done. Probing also helped guarantee the generation of immediate feedback. The use of open-ended interviews helped the researcher gain relatively speedy insight into a particular problem or issue (Briggs et al., 2012, p. 251). As the research collection exercise progressed, the researcher kept on understanding more from the interactions with the participants.

While conducting the interviews, I followed Kvale's (2007) suggestions regarding the qualities of a successful interviewer. I tried to be sensitive and gentle. As an investigator, I did a lot of listening with the primary purpose of focusing and substantiating the flow of information to maintain coherence through critical judgement.

Furthermore, I carefully considered the timing and location of the interviews (Briggs et al., 2012) to avoid interruptions. All interviews took place on the school premises. Interviews with the head teachers were conducted in their offices, while for teachers a quiet room was sought. This was aimed at avoiding interruptions such as happened in the second interview I held with one of the teachers, which was interrupted by fellow teachers and pupils. Interviews lasted for about 45 minutes to an hour.

3.7.2 Observation method

Creswell (2013, p. 166) defines observation as "the act of noting a phenomenon in the field". In qualitative case study approaches, as Yin (2014) indicates, observations provide a typical real-world setting for generating data. The data collected through observations are not interpreted or distorted by anyone else's perceptions, but rather allow for primary checking of non-verbal cues and conditional influences (Brooks & Normore, 2015; Yin, 2011). Therefore, observations allow for a direct interpretation of the psychological state and perspectives of the participants (Briggs et al., 2012).



In this study, six non-participant classroom observations were conducted in the classes of class teachers who were not interviewed. As Given (2008) puts it, non-participant observations involve studying participants without actively taking part in what they are doing. Observation can be used when the focus of the study is to answer the how and why questions and when little is known to explain people's behaviour in a particular context (Given, 2008). Further, observations allow the researcher to see exactly what is going on, thereby enabling them to make judgements and interpret the meaning of the words used based on the actual context. This context was indeed the focus of this study, that is, how teachers' classroom practices affect the quality of primary education in the context of Ugandan primary schools (focusing on Bushenyi district) as per the existing categories. The observations were done using an observation checklist (Appendix IV) and the focus was on the language and the meaning of the words teachers use in class, the number of pupils per class, methods of teaching, examples teachers use while teaching, availability and use of instructional materials, attention to individuals, levels of pupil engagement and classroom assessment criteria. With regard to the use of charts in the classroom, significant variations emerged. All urban schools visited had relevant subject charts pinned up in the classroom but only one of the rural schools had done so. Further engagement with one of the teachers revealed that while such charts actually existed they were kept in safekeeping in the head teacher's office to avoid being stolen because classrooms could not be locked as they had no doors and windows.

Non-participant observation was used because it helps the observer to obtain "a more comprehensive view of what is being observed" *as well as* "a more objective view of the reality being investigated" [italics added] (Briggs et al., 2012, p. 116). This helped generate data that were useful in answering the second research question: How do teachers practise quality in primary education in the classrooms? While conducting classroom observations, I constantly compared and linked the information from the document analysis and the interviews with what was actually taking place in the classrooms. Each classroom observation lasted for 40 minutes, which is the standard time for a single lesson in the Ugandan primary education sector.

While the observations followed a formal protocol, as approved by the University of Pretoria's Research and Ethics Committee, when presented with the opportunity I also conducted informal, incidental observations. For instance, I was able to take note of the



following: arrival and departure time of both pupils and teachers, the dress code, language used at school, availability/provision of meals at school, the general school environment and some cases of teachers coming to school drunk, and thus staggering in the compound.

Furthermore, beyond the classroom environment I observed charts pinned up in head teachers' offices. These mainly comprised development plans, year-on-year enrolment trends, PLE results, government grant amounts received each year and its actual use, national school calendar, standard grading criteria, duty roster, and the school's specific strategic direction, in particular the vision, mission, core values and guiding principles. However, although the level of emphasis varied from one school to another most of the school visions seen contained an element of quality education. This pointed to the fact that although there are national standards for quality education, each school emphasises different aspects and has a significant bearing on what happens in the classrooms.

For the purposes of remaining neutral in the study and to avoid instances in which my presence would influence whatever was being observed, as Yin (2014) emphasises, I kept on assuring participants of confidentiality and anonymity and reminding them of the study's purpose. I equally kept close to participants by maintaining a cordial relationship, yet at the same time kept a professional distance to ensure that no behaviour and information were concealed. To address the main challenge of the observation method namely, failure to get the right interpretation of an event (Flick, 2014), I, as Briggs et al. (2012) advise, triangulated the data from observations with the data generated from the interviews and the document analysis. Follow-up questions aimed at clarifying issues were also made whenever the need arose.

3.7.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research (Bowen, 2009) that involves identifying, accessing and analysing both printed and electronic documents (Brooks and Normore, 2015; Briggs et al., 2012; Maree, 2015) to add meaning within the context of the study. As Yin (2014, p. 352) observes, "our lives as individuals as well as members of a society ... as a whole have become sullen to recording" and to that effect, argues that recorded information should also be included in data sources.



A document analysis was conducted in order to review existing documents to ascertain the ways in which quality education is perceived at the national level by policy makers, as well as how teachers, through their classroom practices, translate quality education into reality in primary education in Uganda. The documents used were of several types and included official policy documents, legal documents (such as regulations, statutes and acts), newspaper clippings and mass media articles (Yin, 2003). Others included school-specific policies and documents such as the strategic plans, development plans, operational guidelines, rules and regulations (Gray, 2004).

The reviews were done using a document review checklist (Appendix V). The reviews continued throughout the research process, helping to provide an understanding of teachers' conceptions and constructions of quality education as they implement it in the classroom, thereby ascertaining how policy intentions are aligned with practice. Most of the documents were collected during the data collection exercise: at the end of each interview, I would ask if I could make copies of relevant documents. Most of the schools visited did not have copies of national documents, which implies that either they did not have access to the documents or they were not following them in their daily school operations. However, participants knew where such documents could be found and generally gave me an indication of where I could go them. Accordingly, I ended up visiting the DEO, the Ministry of Education and Sports offices and the Uganda National Documentation Centre for the national education policy documents. Other documents were retrieved from the Ministry of Education and Sports website. A list of the reviewed documents and a description of their focus are contained in Table 3.4.



Table 3.4: Documents reviewed

Document title	Description
Guidelines on policy, planning, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the implementation of UPE for district and urban councils	Provide a framework for the implementation of UPE, articulating what diverse stakeholders must do to ensure education access and quality.
Records of pupils' academic performance	Provide a progressive report on pupils' academic performance
Schools' strategic and development Plans	A master plan that gives direction to the school activities in a specified period of time, together with the resources require.
School & institution calendar, 2018	Provides an overall framework for school activities including start and end dates for every term.
Operational guidelines, rules and regulations	Spell out schools' specific rules and regulations which guide the conduct of school managers, teachers and pupils
Records of pupil enrolment rates	Record of pupil enrolment trends, class completion and attrition rates
Schemes of work and lesson plans	Guide teachers on what to teach, when, lesson objectives, assessment methods and so forth
The Education Sector Strategic Plan (2017–2020)	Provides a policy framework for the education sector in a bid to provide quality education to the citizens and the resources required for this
Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards: Indicators for Education Institutions	Guidelines on the facilities every school should have to start and operate smoothly.
The Education Act, 2008	Streamlines the legal guidelines according to which education stakeholders can work. It also articulates the framework for guiding all pertinent issues in the education sector.
School Facilities Grant (SFG) for primary schools: Planning and implementation guidelines for districts and urban councils	Spells out the way primary education funds should be used and accounted for. It also articulates the role of local government units in the management of primary education.
Newspapers articles on the education sector	Media coverage of pertinent issues regarding the state of education in Uganda, policy design and implementation process.



In conducting the document analysis, I borrowed from Scott's (1990) four principles, expounded on by Briggs et al. (2012). The principles include authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning.

Authenticity refers to “the soundness and authorship of the documents” (Briggs et al., 2012, p. 301). When analysing documents, I started by ascertaining the author and checking whether the documents were originals or copies. In cases where I was given copies, I ensured that no pages were missing, as this would mean missing some information. Documents included national documents such as the Education Sector Strategic Plan, the Education Act, and the UPE policy guidelines, as well as school-based documents that guide operations such as the school development plans. For the school development plans, I checked to ascertain whether they had been approved by the respective SMCs. I also analysed teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans. Approvals to the schemes of work and lesson plans were usually done by the head teacher or the director of studies in cases where he/she existed.

Credibility refers to analysing the documents for accuracy and ensuring that there are no errors and distortions in the document (Mogalakwe, 2006). First, I would try to understand the author. Most of the documents were the result of a group effort, for example acts of parliament, commissions, ministerial and sectoral plans, as well as school development plans. This confirmed that the documents were sufficiently credible. Sometimes the document analysis led to posing questions to the head teachers and teachers regarding the factual intentions of the authors and the circumstances under which such documents were written.

Representativeness, as Mogalakwe (2006, p. 227) puts it, refers to “whether the evidence is typical of its kind, or if it is not, whether the extent of its untypicality is known”. In this regard, I assessed the extent to which the documents analysed represented the entire education sector. For example, all policy documents articulated educational interests at the national level irrespective of school differences. Nevertheless, I took Briggs et al.'s (2012) advice that researchers should attempt to ascertain the selective retention of documents in a bid to assess their representativeness. I therefore had to draw a distinction between national documents and school-specific documents.



And finally, with regard to the principle of meaning, Mogalakwe (2006, p. 227) states that this refers “to whether the evidence is clear and comprehensible”. I looked for both literal and interpretative meaning. Literal meaning refers to the face value meaning of the document, which calls for the meaning to be reconstructed. Interpretative meaning, on the other hand, requires the researcher relate the face value meaning to the context in which the documents were produced (Scott, 1990). I related the documents to the contexts in which they were written and further ascertained the extent to which the content represented current practice in the environment. For example, reports that academic performance had improved by a certain percentage constituted face value meaning. In this regard, I needed to ascertain the absolute values to understand how individual pupils were performing and what the factors behind such performance may have been. Thus, in this regard participants were engaged to generate data that helped substantiate information gained from the document analysis.

The document analysis was done in line with the research questions and themes that guided the study. This followed the teachers’ understanding of quality education and the policies that articulate quality education dimensions, how teachers practised quality education in their respective classrooms and the reasons as to why they actually practised quality education the way they did. Ultimately, I generated a lot of data from the documents, especially from the policies that articulate the teaching-learning process in the Ugandan primary education sector. To synthesise the data in accordance with the research questions, I adopted Miles and Huberman’s (1994) idea of developing a framework to organise the data in a summary form, as presented in Table 3.5.



Table 3.5: Document summary form

Document name (for example)	Page No	Salient point	Theme	Research question
The Education Sector Strategic Plan (2017–2020)	1	<i>To provide for, support, guide, coordinate, regulate, and promote delivery of quality Education and Sports to all persons in Uganda; for national integration, individual, and national development</i> (Mission of the education sector)	The understanding quality education	RQ1
School & institution calendar, 2018	2	<i>Classes must start at 8 a.m. and end not later than 5 p.m. every day. Districts/City Inspectors of Schools are requested to ensure that schools comply</i>	Existing policy quality education	RQ1 & 3

By using the above document summary form, I was able to guard against data overload (Miles & Huberman, (1994) by corroborating the data obtained from the document analysis with that data obtained from the interviews and observations. This also helped to come up with themes and sub-themes that cut across the different arrays of the generated data.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a branch of Philosophy that studies human behaviour or conduct from the point of view of good or bad, right or wrong. It constitutes acceptable behaviour in any given society (Corbett-Whittier, 2013). In research ethics is critical for there are a number ethical issues that researchers must adhere to (Willig & Stainton, 2008). Among the ethical issues for consideration in research are the right to voluntary participation (Christians, 2011, respect of participants (Yin, 2013), intellectual property of other authors (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010), protection of participants from risk and harm (Babbie, 2011) and protection of participants’ privacy and confidentiality (Christians, 2011). It is, therefore, important to ensure that these ethical issues are mitigated (Flick, 2014) and thus the study took appropriate action to ensure that they were effectively addressed during the data collection exercise.



Given the nature of this study, with the involvement of human subjects, it was envisioned that ethical issues such as institutional and legal requirements, individual informed consent, and protection of privacy and confidentiality of the respondents would arise. To address these issues, a number of measures were taken.

First, the study was conducted in line with both the University of Pretoria's Ethics Policy and the guidelines of the Ugandan National Council for Science and Technology, a body responsible for the clearance of research ethics in line with the Ugandan Individual Right to Privacy. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was sought from the Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. Upon receiving this letter and the ethical clearance certificate, I presented the documents to Mildmay Uganda Research and Ethics Clearance committee.

The National Council for Science and Technology responsible for Research Ethics Clearance has 24 accredited institutions that do protocol reviews on its behalf. Once the accredited institutions have completed the review, the investigator is issued with a letter allowing him/her to submit the proposal to the National Council for Science and Technology for final approval. I used Mildmay Uganda Research and Ethics Committee for protocol review (see Appendix VII for the clearance letter). This stage lasted for three months and involved completing an application form and submitting the following documents for review: copy of the proposal, guidelines for research from the university, ethics clearance letter from the university and all tools. The proposal was reviewed and changes suggested, especially to the tools following the pilot study. Thereafter, it took a month to get final approval after submitting to the National Council for Science and Technology. A clearance letter was then issued (see Appendix VI). In total, the ethics clearance process in Uganda lasted four months. The rigorous process was to ensure that the study would be conducted in an ethically accepted manner without exposing the participants to any risk or harm. In addition to obtaining a letter of permission to conduct the study from the Ugandan National Council for Science and Technology, the President's Office and the District Resident Commissioner were also informed. The DEO equally had to clear me (see Appendix VIII) to proceed to the field. This is in line with Yin (2011) and Flick (2014) who emphasise that it is important to obtain adequate authorisation to gain access to study sites.



The Individual Right to Privacy was also of relevance in the country in which the study was conducted, namely, Uganda and, thus, the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda guided the study in as far as the protection of citizens was concerned. Of great importance was the observance of Article 27(2), which states that: “No person shall be subjected to interference with the privacy of the person’s home, correspondence, communication or other property” (The Republic of Uganda, 1995, p. 37). This generally guided the research process. Care was taken during the data collection process to get participants to willingly expound on their ideas.

The principle of informed consent was central to the data collection process (see Appendix II for a Consent Form). Participation in the study was purely voluntary and the participants were notified of their right to withdraw from the study (interview process) at any time. As a preamble to any interaction with the respondents, I explained in detail that the study was for academic purposes only and that the information provided would only be used for that specific purpose. I explained every detail in the consent form to every participant. Every participant signed an informed consent form, confirming that the contents were clearly understood and that there was willingness to participate in the study. I also dated and signed the consent forms.

In a bid to protect participants from unnecessary exposure, harm or risk, participants were assured that their names as individual participants and the names of their respective primary schools would not be used in the report (Babbie, 2011; Christians, 2011). Indeed, pseudonyms were adopted for the purposes of analysing the data and report writing. The schools were given pseudonyms – Kent, Radox, Merit, Reality, Glad and Kids Cross primary schools – as were the individual participants. For example, from Kent primary school, James, John, Justus, Juliet and Judith were involved in the study; Eunice, Esther, Eddie, Emmy and Enid were selected from Radox primary school; Peter, Pius, Peace, Patric and Paul were selected from Merit primary school; Adrine, Alex, Andrew, Abby, and Anne were selected from Reality primary school; Grace, Gad, Glory, Gaston and Glen were selected from Glad primary school, while Mike, Martha, Mary, Milton and Mitchell were selected from Kids Cross primary.

With regard to the issue of intellectual property and rights of other authors, acknowledgment of all materials used was done by indicating the sources. The thesis



was, as a requirement by the University of Pretoria, subjected to the Turnitin anti-plagiarism software to authenticate originality. This conforms to Vanderstoep & Johnston's (2009) idea that the researcher must to present other authors' and participants' ideas as his/her own and that there is need to avoid data fabrication and distortions (APA, 2010).

3.9 Trustworthiness of the findings

Trustworthiness is an attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon is presented and can be transferred to similar contexts, and the data are dependable and represent what is actually found on the ground (Shenton, 2004). Scholars have suggested a number of criteria for ascertaining the trustworthiness of qualitative research. For example, Kvale (1995) emphasises that trustworthiness can be ascertained using the criteria of (i) correspondence – whether knowledge statements correspond with the objective world (Kvale, 1995, p. 19); (ii) coherence – which focuses on establishing the degree of consistency and logical alignment of the responses; and (iii) pragmatic utility – the relationship between knowledge statements and their implications for a phenomenon.

Guba & Lincoln (1994), Cohen et al. (2011), and Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba (2007) all agree that trustworthiness criteria for evaluating the rigour of findings in qualitative studies include credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. This study adopted these criteria. The way each was applied during the research process is elucidated below.

3.9.1 Credibility of the findings

Credibility refers to the extent to which the research findings can be trusted (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Macnee & McCabe, 2008). This implies that the information contained in a research work is obtained from original data and the interpretations made are a true reflection of participants' original views (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Credibility in this study was enhanced using the following strategies:



(i) *Triangulation of the findings*

Baxter & Jack (2008) posit that triangulation can enhance research credibility. Triangulation allows for the use of various methods (interviews, document analysis and observations) to generate the data. Accordingly, in this study, the data were generated from multiple sources (Briggs et al., 2012; Creswell, 2013) with different characteristics, namely, government, private and religious schools in both rural and urban settings. I also interacted with the participants a number of times, once in person and followed this up with a number of interactions over the telephone whenever the need to clarify certain aspects arose. This was done throughout the data analysis exercise and was aimed at verifying and filling the information gaps detected after the fieldwork exercise.

(ii) *Use of peer debriefing of the findings*

A qualitative researcher, as Guba (1981) emphasises, should seek academic support from professionals who are willing to offer insights and guidance in the study. Right away from proposal stage, I constantly engaged five of my colleagues from Uganda who were also doing a PhD at the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, to read and critique my work. These colleagues were instrumental in improving the methodological rigour and quality of the study findings, especially in aligning arguments. A professional proof-reader and editor was also engaged, not only to align the flow and use of language but also to give professional critique.

(iii) *Use of member checks*

According to Guba (1981, p. 85), members checks refer to the fact that “data and interpretations are continuously tested as they are derived from members of various audiences and groups from which data are solicited”.

Member checks are at the heart of credibility in qualitative studies, and owing to their importance researchers are required to incorporate participants’ voices in the analysis and interpretation of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Throughout the study, I verified the interview findings by sharing a summarised report of comments from each school visited with the participants. This sharing was done on two levels: at the end of each day and after compiling the draft report. Where there was



disagreement, information was adjusted. Additionally, four participants added additional information they felt I had left out and should have been captured in the report.

3.9.2 Dependability of the findings

Dependability refers to the stability of findings over time. It describes the extent to which research findings can provide meaning consistently. Dependability involves engaging participants in evaluating the findings to ensure that interpretations and recommendations do actually emerge from the real research informants (Cohen et al., 2011). In ensuring dependability of the findings, the following strategies were employed.

(i) Code-recode strategy

Dependability can be enhanced by obtaining consensus on the codes, sub-themes and themes developed during data analysis (Boxer & Jack, 2008). Hence, after transcribing the interview recordings, the transcriptions were printed out and I engaged a skilled person to assist with the use Atlas.ti for data analysis purposes. I gave one copy to the analyst and I retained the other. The two of us then developed codes and themes that we later compared for harmonisation before doing the final analysis (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010). The draft report was shared with the supervisor who also made inputs to refine the data codes and linkages to produce a meaningful presentation and the relationships between the themes when writing the final report.

(ii) Keeping an audit trail

An audit trail is an indication of the entire research process to validate the findings (Anney, 2014). In respect to this, I kept a record of all the research processes undertaken, including the documents that were accessed and reviewed, raw data in the form of audio recordings and observational notes. This provided a basis for going back to the raw data for verification purposes.

3.9.3 Transferability of the findings

Transferability is the extent to which any study findings can be transferred to a different context by engaging other participants. It is the equivalent of the generalisability of findings in quantitative studies (Bitsch, 2005; Briggs et al., 2012; Creswell, 2013; Tobin



& Begley, 2004). Thick description was employed as a strategy to ensure the transferability of findings.

(i) *Thick description*

This is an attempt to collect rich descriptive data that will allow a comparison of the research context to be made to other contexts. As Li (2004, p. 305) puts, “thick description enables judgment about how well the research context fits other contexts”. As Shenton (2004) recommends, in this chapter, I detail discuss the processes that the study went through in detail. Consequently, the threads of the problem statement, research questions, research design, philosophical paradigm, the determination of samples and the methods used to collect and analyse the data all come together. This can assist in replicating the study in different contexts (Guba, 1981).

3.9.4 Confirmability of the findings

This refers to the extent to which the research findings can be confirmed by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Confirmability aims at ensuring that the findings are not just the researcher’s imaginations but emerged from the data provided by participants (Golafshani, 2003; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Throughout the data collection process, I kept a reflective journal of practice containing an account of whatever happened in the field. This included the itinerary for visiting sites and conducting interviews, as well as critical reflections and observations on the data collection process. The journal helped me to even reflect on negative findings from the case analysis, especially the realisation that UPE programme had not necessarily increased the number of pupils in government schools. In my reflective journal of practice, I avidly recorded the total number of pupils in every school that I visited.

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis for qualitative studies depends on the investigator’s style and their ability to think rigorously, along with sufficient evidence and being open to alternative interpretations (Yin, 2003). There is no blueprint and analysis should be take place throughout the entire research process (Argon, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Flick, 2014; Yin, 2009). Nevertheless, Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 11) advance a general road map for the processes of qualitative data analysis, which include (i) data reduction, (ii) the data



display phase and (iii) conclusion drawing and verification. I adopted this model to analyse the data.

3.10.1 Data reduction

Data reduction involves selecting and concentrating the data into appropriate summaries, clusters, themes and memos. Systematic scrutiny and analysis of observations and document reviews started in the field. However, transcribing the recorded interviews began after the fieldwork was complete. Only two participants among the 24 interviewed refused to be recorded. In these cases, I took notes during the interviews.

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim as Gilgun (2007) advises, including all the details such as the “mmhs”, “ahas”, “oks”, as well as taking note of gestures and demeanour during the interviews to ensure the comprehensiveness of the extracts and an understanding of the participants’ and investigator’s cues. The interviewees were given a pseudonym for identification purposes. The field notes were also transcribed to supplement the audio transcriptions. All the transcriptions were finally printed to assist in the coding process.

The printed transcripts were read a number of times for the purposes of becoming familiar with the data. I constantly found cases of spelling mistakes and message lapses that compelled me to listen to the audios again and again. With the errors put right, I then embarked on highlighting similar ideas with a similar colour and attaching words, phrases and labels in the left-hand margins. These words, phrases and labels were then used to create concepts and themes that guided further analysis. The process of attaching words, phrases and labels was done in line with the research questions.

3.10.2 Data display

Data display involved the adoption of matrices, patterns and networks to be able to trace linkages and relationships in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, all the elicited ideas were organised in a manner that reflected the interconnections within these ideas. After developing concepts and themes (during data reduction phase), the transcriptions were exported to Atlas.ti V 7.57 for the generation of linkages and



networks. The networks developed helped understand the internal structures and associations that were useful in formulating the final explanations and inferences using content analysis. Content analysis was conducted on two levels. The first level was the basic level or the manifest level and involved a descriptive account of the data, for example what was said, but with no comments or theories as to the why or the how. The second level was the higher level or latent level and involved a more interpretive analysis focusing on the responses and their meanings or implications in the context of the study. This also involved the linguistic interpretations of the words used, how they were used and why they were used, especially in the context of the study.

3.10.3 Conclusion drawing and verification

Conclusion drawing and verification, on the other hand, involved assessing what the data meant, ascertaining their implications and drawing inferences. This constituted the foundation for data interpretation. During this phase, I aimed at describing in detail the meaning of the associations developed during data display. Interpretations were subsequently made following the emerging linkages within the data. I was also able to develop more subthemes and at times combined some based on my lived experience and what I had observed during the fieldwork. This phase compelled me to interrogate linkages and associations to arrive at valid conclusions. In making conclusions, I used the following strategies:

(i) *Making contrasts/comparisons*

According to Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 254), “we draw a contrast or make a comparison between two sets of things – persons, roles, activities, cases as a whole – that are known to differ in some other important respect”. Accordingly, I compared the findings at various levels: (i) between elicited responses from head teachers and class teachers, (ii) between the schools, as there were different categories, and (iii) between the different data sets (interviews, observations and document analysis).



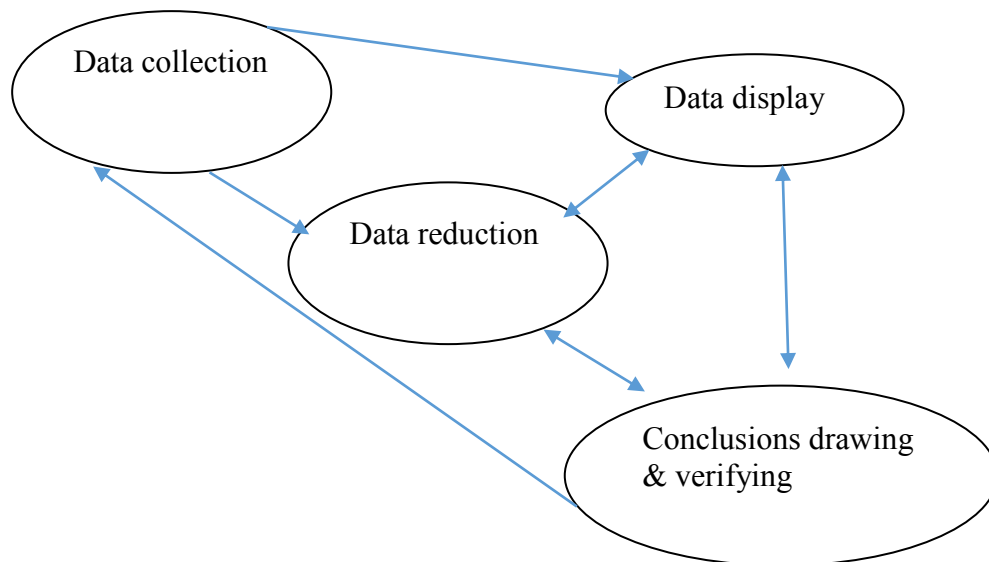
(ii) Counting

In the process of making and verifying conclusions, I looked at the frequency with a certain work or phrase and the number of times it appeared to come up. Conclusions in this regard were made according to the number of occurrences of each. For example, all the respondents in government schools mentioned the lack of housing and poor remuneration for teachers as factors that constrain effective teaching. After all, the creation of themes or patterns is based on isolating something that happens frequently and the consistency with which it happens (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

(iii) Making conceptual coherence

This was done after identifying logical chains of causalities, associations and disassociations that were electronically generated using Atlas.ti and by tracing relationships indicated by the words used given the contextual realities when conducting the interviews. The inherent linguistic meanings were also traced throughout the document analysis applied in the study. Thereafter, in line with the conceptual framework, I manually developed a matrix that was used to present the data. This was done for every research question as a whole as well as for each theme. In general, the entire data analysis process and the phases involved are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Data analysis phases



Source: Adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 12)

Figure 3 shows that the three activities of data analysis (data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions) are founded on data collection which also constitutes the basis for the data analysis cycle. The arrows indicate linkages among the phases, with the two-way arrows indicating that the process involves forward and backward linkages. For example, in making conclusions, I at times found it necessary to realign the networks in the data display. This also called for the introduction of new codes or an amalgamation of some codes at the reduction stage. There were also cases where I had to obtain clarification from the participants in order to make informed conclusions even when data collection had ended. Such clarification were obtained in form of telephone calls, implying that even at the stage of drawing conclusions, I still had to go back to data collection. This shows that qualitative data analysis is an iterative process and can only end once report writing has been completed.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter focused on presenting the methodological foundations of the study, articulating the research philosophy, approach, philosophical paradigm and design that provided a foundation for the entire research process. Importantly, the chapter described how data were collected and analysed. The entire process of data generation, analysis, interpretations and report writing was guided by the ethical considerations that were



taken care of using a number of checks, balances and principles. In the succeeding chapters (chapters: four, five and six), I present the findings of this study on the understanding of quality education.



CHAPTER FOUR

QUALITY EDUCATION AS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter (chapter three), I discussed the way in which the study was conducted, articulating the research philosophy, approach, paradigm, design, data collection methods and tools and data analysis methods. In this chapter, I present participants' views on the understanding of quality education with respect to national development and the way teachers practise quality education in the classrooms, as well as why, according to teachers, do they practise quality education in the ways they do.

The elicited responses are synthesised and presented under five sub-themes: planning for the child's future, holistic training, social responsibility, empowering children with competitive skills, and tolerance. These were identified as having a direct linkage to national development. The presentation of findings reiterates the study's foundation and argument that the current state of education in general, and quality in particular, has been shaped by the global neoliberal reform agenda in education that has placed the development agenda and initiatives in the control of private sector organisations, with government controlling the pace from a distance. In aligning the findings to this argument, I make a comparative analysis of the school categories that were involved in the study.

4.2 Planning for the child's future as a good, self-reliant and responsible citizen

Throughout the data collection exercise, I was guided by the themes in the literature and the conceptual framework on the understanding of quality education. To this effect, in the interviews the participants were requested to explain how they understood quality education with respect to national development. Accordingly, a number of participants revealed that quality education is linked to planning for the child's future and transforming the child into a good, self-reliant and responsible citizen in a manner that reduces inefficiencies and maximises results and profits. Arguments for this thinking pointed to the fact that without effective planning, the education system may not serve the needs of the citizens. In expressing her argument in support of this standpoint, Eunice had this to say:



“Quality education; it refers to planning for a better future – that is, the future of pupils – and such a plan should address their economic, health, and general wellbeing both physical and social”.

Mike also pointed out the following:

“I think, personal development according to my perspective, learners need to know what they need in order to live a better life and develop. This requires parental planning and good discipline that children get early”.

And as Peter put it, the plan should be *“sustainable and contribute to the Millennium Development Goals”* – the sustainable development goals in the current development discourse.

The views expressed in the above excerpts suggest that the participants were aware of the usefulness of quality education to national development. The views reveal that for quality education to contribute to national development, there is need for congruent planning championed by the government in which the national plans inform sector and institutional reflections on planning. In the education sector, this would imply that its plans should inform those of the various education service providers. The views also articulate that planning for a child’s development requires the participation of diverse stakeholders, for example the government which sets the strategic direction, schools which implement government interventions, parents who influence and direct children’s efforts, especially at the primary level, and learners’ interests and passions. The views also suggest that if a child is to contribute towards development, the plans set forth for the realisation of such an objective should start shaping children’s characters during the early days of schooling. Finally, the views suggest that planning for a child should look at all the foundations of development, such as the economic, social, environmental, health and political foundations that would harmoniously contribute towards the realisation of the global development agenda.

Policy wise, the views emanating from the interviews revealed that Ugandan education sector planning is guided by a number of education policy review commission reports, in particular the Castle Commission and the Kajubi Commission reports. In explaining how these reports direct the Ugandan education sector plans and the generation of



quality education within a national development perspective, Mike pointed out the following:

“... we have the education policy that guides the whole education system. It has been there since the 1980s. I recall the outcomes of the Castle Commission and the Kajubi Commission are what we are still following, though things have changed and other policies have been introduced. But the aim to develop Uganda and education structures has not changed”.

Adding to the above idea, Peter said:

“We are guided by those policy documents, especially the ones that are statutory, for example, the Education Policy Review Commission – that one of Professor Senteza Kajubi of 1989 that was later in 1992 changed to the Education White Paper is still guiding our education sector and teaching. It was talking about the relevance of education to the learners, then it was also talking about the education system, especially the levels from primary one to primary seven, then another year to cater for those practical aspects of education that can give learners skills for developing the country”.

Participants' views in the quotes above suggest that participants are aware of the history of Ugandan education sector plans and acknowledge that education institutions are still following the recommendations of the commission reports. Of importance here is the articulation of the development trajectory and the strategic direction articulated by the commission reports. The ways teachers practise quality education in the classrooms is guided by the commission report stipulations, which in effect strategically positions the current Ugandan education agenda to meeting the needs of the country with respect to national development. It is also suggested that a clear adherence to the review commission reports would translate into equipping learners with practical and relevant skills critical to the realisation of national growth and development.

An analysis of the documents confirmed the views expressed in the interviews. Although there were also commissions during the time of the colonial government, the current education is guided by the commissions instituted by the independent



government. These were intended to assess and strategically direct the education sector in a manner that could harness the development needs of the country. Of importance, the post-independence commissions were alluded to as critical milestones and have directed the education sector for decades. Specifically, the 1963 Castle Commission advised the independent government on the transition process from the colonial education system to focus on the needs of indigenous Ugandan citizens. One of the main recommendations of the Castle Commission was to merge primary with junior secondary level. It also recommended the expansion of secondary and teacher training education and the abolition of junior education to pave the way for the eight years of primary school from the previous six years and later seven years. The Castle Commission brought into effect an enhanced focus on the need to increase access to education and also the quality of skills required to boost agriculture, technical education, girl child education and adult education. These are still the strong foundations for equitable and sustainable development that the education sector offers. The Kajubi Commission of 1989 is lauded for its recommendation to increase access to education through UPE, which was introduced in 1997. This has among its policy objectives to:

“(i) provide the facilities and resources to enable every child to enter and remain in school until the primary cycle of education is complete; (ii) make education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities; (iii) ensure that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans; (iv) reduce poverty by equipping every individual with basic skills” (Bategeka & Okurut, 2006, p. 1).

This suggests that with the effective implementation of UPE, the Ugandan education system would be streamlined with increased access to education and, with the distributed effects thereof, economic and social disparities would be reduced. This would help reduce poverty and increase the accumulation of human capital, all of which are critical to national development. However, it should be noted that with the current neoliberal reform agenda characterised by the marketisation of the education sector, social class patterns of inequality have greatly increased. In fact, the pricing phenomenon has persistently pushed the poor out of the education system, or at least into the poorly performing schools. And, as Hill & Kumar (2009) argue, education marketisation is controlled by heavy systems of surveillance and accountability to control the state apparatuses of education.



To further the realisation of UPE objectives, as some participants revealed, the government came up with the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), which as participants pointed out, schools are following. Accordingly, as per the findings of the documents review, the education policy objectives that provide a framework for planning, managing and implementing the education sector interventions are enshrined in the ESSP. The ESSP objectives include: (i) achieving equitable access to relevant quality education and training; (ii) ensuring delivery of relevant quality education and training; and (iii) enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of education services (MoES, 2008, pp. 23–28, 2017, p. xi). Further, the document emphasises quality education indicators such as pass rates, completion rates, availability of teaching materials and an improved teaching-learning environment including reduced teacher: pupil ratio and classroom availability (MoES, 2008). Whereas the objectives articulate an element of relevant education that would help contribute towards national growth and development, the ESSP 2017–2020 shows a progressive reduction of national expenditure on education as a share of the national budget from 13.5% in the 2012/2013 financial year to 11.08% in the 2016/2017 financial year (MoES, 2017). This poses the challenge of how the education sector objectives can be achieved amidst a reduction in funding while the demand for education keeps on increasing. It can be argued that the government is to a large extent pulling out of the education sector, leaving it to the private sector operators. Apparently, 36% of the primary schools, 62% of secondary and 52% of post-secondary institutions are owned and managed by the private sector (MoES, 2017). Thus, it emerges clearly that the current Ugandan education sector in the entirety of the neoliberalism reform agenda cannot guarantee equitable and sustainable development when the few private providers are in charge of the education sector.

With regard to citizenship, the elicited views alluded to the fact that the planned strategies for generating quality should aim at graduating a person with certain qualities that are expected of a responsible citizen. For instance, Gad had this to say:

“Quality education, it means building up good citizens in terms of the academics, and the behaviour and even to be good examples to other people by doing things that are developmental.”

Arguing in the same direction, Martha emphasised that sometimes:



“There are learners who are poorly groomed. And where learners are groomed well educationally, you find that they succeed in academics and life after school. It is also a reason as to why when you compare schools, you find that other schools perform better like getting 20 candidates in first grade and you go to other schools and you find that they do not have any”.

The preceding quotes point to the fact that quality education should also be looked at from a social lens to address the socially accepted behaviours that society cherishes. It is suggested that a child’s upbringing determines the way he/she will behave at school, and therefore affects his/her academic achievement. Given the views in the excerpts, it appears that being a good citizen is synonymous with how one behaves at school and conducts oneself in terms of socially constrained expectations. This way, quality education would, therefore, be the foundation for social virtues such as peace, justice, benevolence and so forth, which are critical for social cohesion that stimulates national development. Conversely, defining quality education as planning for the child’s future to become a good, self-reliant and responsible citizen requires the contribution of multiple stakeholders such as the government, schools, teachers, parents and the learners themselves, with the government playing the leading role. Moreover, the findings suggest there must be an institutional framework to level the playing fields in education so as to eliminate the barriers that impede some learners from being good and responsible citizens.

With regard to the issue of responsible citizens, the study findings are in harmony with the observation made by Masino & Niño-Zarazú (2015) that education policies and interventions become more effective in improving student performance and learning when education policies are designed to take cognisance of social norms and progressive citizen choices and needs. This would call for the integration of citizenship values in the curriculum at all educational levels. Also, the findings agree with Clark (2011), who argues that governments have a critical role in reconsidering support for education that provides an opportunity to absorb and utilise citizens who graduate in a manner that contributes to growth and development.

The issue of planning for learners’ futures has been articulated in development undertakings (see Biagi & Lucifora, 2008; Clark, 2011; Snieska et al., 2015), with the



argument that quality education cannot be attained unless it is incorporated in the strategic development policies, lest there will be negative consequences such as unemployment. In emphasising this, Rafferty (2012) and Akareem & Hossain (2016) highlight the fact that education is unable to solve the unemployment issue unless certain social distinctions, especially segregation of the minority graduates, are addressed. This calls for enhanced planning for the future wellbeing of the younger generation. However, with the Ugandan government’s abdication of education to the private institutions, it is certainly a puzzle as to how citizenship virtues can be inculcated in learners, unless the market forces demand the values.

To orient the schools’ operations towards national development and to prove to the public that inefficiencies are avoided, each school has a strategic direction which is included in the strategic plan and a corresponding development plan. This is based on the belief that development must be planned for if a unified approach to the set development targets is to be achieved. Throughout the data collection exercise, I found that schools had development plans that were aimed at articulating the development path, resources required and timelines for deliverables. In addition to the strategic plans, schools had development plans in place that were used to translate the strategic directions into practice. Of critical importance was the fact that each development plan articulated a concern for quality education, positioning the teacher at the centre for transforming strategies into results. All schools visited had these development plans displayed on the wall of the head teacher’s office. Some of the development plans observed were in the formats indicated in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1: Format of the school development plan (a)

Priority	Strategies	Objectives	Responsible person
Academic Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily preparation of lesson plans - Morning and evening extra studies - Regular staff meetings - Monthly and termly tests - Effective supervision - Administering daily homework 	Improved academic Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Head teacher - Deputy head teacher - Director of studies - Teachers

In another school, the template below was used:



Table 4.2: Format of the school development plan (b)

Activity	Objectives	Person/Leader	Collaborating partners	Time frame	Budget (UGX)	Source of funds	Remarks
Homework and tests	- To enable pupils to revise - To enable teachers to monitor pupils' academic progress	HT	- Deputy HT - DOS - All teachers	Feb–Dec	6,993,000	Parents' contributions UPE funds	
Remedial Saturday and holiday teaching	- To improve pupils' academic performance	HT	- Deputy HT - DOS - All teachers	Feb–Dec	10,080,000	PTA funds	

The existence of development plans suggests an effective approach on the part of schools to direct their efforts in the daily school operations. It also helps in resource mobilisation by assigning roles and responsibilities to individuals. This simplifies the monitoring of school progress over time. A common element of academic improvement can be observed in the two development plans, which participants attributed to the need to equip children with the formal skills required to compete academically with other schools on a national level. In this way, it was revealed that the development plan gives each teacher direction in setting academic goals. As one of the participants, Pius, pointed out, *“When we talk of quality work, it means that whatever you do, it must achieve a stated targeted goal. This is in the development plan”*. This suggests that teachers are required to work according to the development plan to ensure that schools contribute towards national development.

The school development plans not only provide a plan for implementation but also specify standards for action. Thus teachers' classroom practices must be fit with the stipulations of schools' strategic plans. On the other hand, teachers' perceptions of the school goals also determine how they execute their role in the classroom. The idea of aligning teachers' classroom practices to their school's strategic plan agrees with UNESCO (2011), which articulates the importance of the school policy and operational plans as significant determinants of quality. However, overreliance on academic competition, which is a feature of the neoliberalism reform agenda (DeSaxe, 2015; Hutchings, 2015), can result in diverting focus to academic targets only and neglects the rest of the domains that are equally critical for national development.



Nevertheless, as a strategy for incorporating development aspects into the daily school operations, some schools have come up with context-specific policies. For example, some primary schools have designed policies aimed at integrating development into the environment. The policies aim at integrating sustainable development concerns into the teaching learning process. Such policies have given rise to projects focusing on training pupils to appreciate and understand the need for national development that is in harmony with the environment. In articulating the rationale for some of the projects, Peter made the following remark:

“We have a project on Conservation Effort for Community Development (CECOD), where we have this education for sustainable development. We use the resources within our environment to develop sustainably. So, I am also giving my input that when we are carrying out assessment at the end of primary seven, that element should also be considered, not only in the cognitive aspects but also on these other application aspects such that when the pupils comes out of school, they are able to utilise whatever resources are available to earn a living and develop”.

The above excerpt suggests that schools were doing a good job of training pupils on how to preserve the environment in all development endeavours without constraining routine school operations. The views in the excerpt further suggest that issues of national development are not examined in primary schools, even though participants were aware of their usefulness in training children on how they can contribute to national development generally. During the school visits, posters were observed carrying messages like *“do not step on grass”*, *“do not litter the compound”*, *“polythene bags are dangerous to the environment”* and *“preserve the environment by planting more trees”*. However, this was more prominent in the urban schools regardless of ownership (government or private). The reason for this could have been the nature of the urban environment where there are high levels of pollution as a result of urban activities. This has become a concern and has increased the vigilance of urban authorities in regard to protecting the environment. Also, the use of non-decomposing materials is high and there is a lack of a natural vegetation due to the nature of urban settlements compared to rural settings.



By incorporating environmental protection in the teaching-learning process, the findings above show the willingness and increased attempts of school managers to orient learners to the preservation of the ecological features, whose indiscriminate exploitation has been a hindrance to global development. Indeed, the findings indicate a good fit with the current global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework (in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development) especially Goals 12 to 15, which articulate the need to preserve the environment for the purposes of transforming the world.

As a way of incorporating development concerns in the teaching-learning process, teachers were teaching using critical thinking method. As revealed by some participants, this method is commonly used in instances when the teacher requires learners to develop self-initiated approaches and alternatives for solving life problems. With regard to national development, the method stimulates creative and innovative insights that can trigger new ways of doing things. For example, in one of the schools visited, Paul was observed during a Mathematics lesson giving primary five pupils a problem that required thinking, reasoning and quick decision-making. He sketched a situation in which he had three items – a hen, a hungry dog and a basket containing half a kilo of millet grains. Paul had to cross a lake with these items by moving just one item at a time. He asked pupils to tell him on how he should cross without losing any of the items, asking them to work out how many trips he would have to make. This task created great interest and everyone tried to solve it. After a number of attempts, one pupil finally got the answer. Paul then took over and explained to the entire class how the pupil had managed to find the answer. Interestingly, the task had embedded logic. For example, Paul could not move with a dog and leave the hen and the millet behind. He could also not move with millet alone and leave the hen and hungry dog together. But he could move with the hen and leave the dog and millet behind. This would finally necessitate getting back to the hen at some point.

These observations suggest that children require logical thinking skills which are helpful in planning for developmental interventions in a manner that maximises the utilisation of the available resources. The case equally suggests that if there is to be sustainable development, it must be in harmony with all the foundations that constitute development, something that calls for strategy analysis in all development programmes and efforts. The case observed suggests that to be effective in using critical thinking,



classroom teachers must help children develop critical-thinking skills before a task is given. This may require being aware of the things happening around them to be able to think creatively and discover various options for solving problems under different circumstances. These findings are in line with DeHaan's (2009) observation that critical thinking can increase children's inventiveness and raise their intelligence quotient. Wang & Zheng (2016) also emphasise the importance of critical thinking, highlighting the fact that as a tool it enhances the development of elements of thought that are inherent in reasoning. This allows logical dialoguing within oneself to take rational decisions and actions. Borrowing from Socrates, Wang & Zheng (2016) maintain that critical thinking focuses on three components – understanding, explaining reasoning and problem solving. In emphasising why critical thinking should be used in teaching, Mason (2008) states that it relates to deep knowledge of oneself in which courage and humility are needed and that, over time, courage and humility can be developed in a child to help him/her understand how he/she can work and survive in harmony with the environment.

The ideas presented in this sub-theme reveal that participants related quality education to planning for the future of a child by preparing him/her to become good, responsible citizens in the future. The participants' views emphasise the usefulness of effective planning for the education sector in the bid for quality education that can finally contribute towards national development. In Uganda, the current policy document that directs the education sector planning processes, the ESSP, merely spells out education quality indicators such as pass rates, completion rates and the learning environment. It neglects the way education should contribute to national development that benefits the majority without any form of segregation or favour based on either income status, race, religion, gender or age, among others. With the government's reduced expenditure on education and its steady withdrawal from the education sector, quality education as a factor in national development is left to the market forces and this is likely to cause development inequalities rather than sustainable development. The next sub-theme presents ideas on quality education as holistic training and aims at ascertaining how ideal training that should stimulate national development is conducted.



4.3 Holistic training

Further responses with regard to the understanding of quality education in the national development perspective revealed that quality education should be one that develops the learners' minds, supports their physical wellbeing and gives the learner practical skills that can be used to transform the community in future. In emphasising holistic training as a manifestation of quality education participants argued differently. For example, Grace said:

“Quality education should be able to train a child holistically, by giving him or her all-round things – all the things. You give the class these four subjects that we teach – the Social Studies, English, Science and Mathematics that are on the timetable, then the co-curriculum where there are sports, music, dance and drama”.

In line with Grace's view, John emphasised that quality education should be the one that:

“Enhances the ability of learners to perform in class activities and even in co-curricular activities. Learners should also be able to live a productive life after school and the starting point is here at the primary level”.

In confirming the two ideas above, Peter emphasised that:

“In fact the kind of education we should give or offer must be comprehensive – all inclusive. It should address concerns of the academic, the soul and even the psychomotor domain – the hand that you touch on such that when pupils have finished this level of education and graduated to other levels, then they are able to live a kind of life that is productive”.

It is evident from these excerpts that participants had a rich understanding of quality education with regard to fostering national development. Views in the excerpts suggest that quality education should be able to transcend pupils' classroom and academic performance to include the skills necessary for developing all domains of a human being such as social, emotional, physical, cognitive, artistic, spiritual as well as language. The views suggest that schools ought to train children beyond the classroom subjects taught for the purposes of nurturing the development of the child's full potential in life,



including talent identification and development. This can help in developing a whole individual, with a balanced understanding of and outlook on the world in which we live.

The views in the excerpts also recognise that the primary school level is not the end of one's educational career, but rather a foundation for other levels, and thus, primary school pupils should be oriented in a manner that prepares them to face the educational challenges likely to come at the other levels of education. With holistic training, it can be argued that the child acquires skills that are useful in exploiting the available life chances whether formally or informally. However, a close analysis of Peter's view (*"the kind of education we should give or offer must be comprehensive – all inclusive"*) suggests that much as participants had a rich understanding of quality education as holistic training, they were not actually practising it. If schools were to emphasise and offer holistic training for the purposes of stimulating national growth and development, the classroom teachers would require some form of training to orient them to the practice of training learners holistically. They would also be required to use diverse training methodologies suitable for the realisation of holistic learning and learning. I note that the effects of the neoliberal reforms in education have changed the development paradigm to the state championing private individuals, with the associated mechanisms benefiting the few who control the means of production at the expense of the majority who lack the means. Thus, development in this regard is conceptualised in the realm of key private players in the development initiatives.

By pointing out that quality education should aim at holistic training of learners, the study findings agree with the findings of Hanushek & Woessmann (2008), who argue that quality education should go beyond the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another to address the way in which learners can use what they have learnt for transformational purposes and holistic development. A similar idea is advanced by Kulshrestha & Pandey (2013), Byamugisha & Ogawa (2010), Afzal et al. (2012) and Shuayb & O'Donnell (2008), who highlight that quality education is the ability to meet life's needs within a transitional framework and should assist individuals to contribute towards national development. In this regard, quality education is perceived as an attempt to train the learners by giving them all-round skills for survival. This understanding suggests that quality education should go beyond the classroom and



academic learning to include skills that children might require in the future even if they do not join formal employment.

Data from the document analysis revealed that the current thematic curriculum hints at the desire to train children holistically. According to the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), [2018], the aim of the primary school curriculum is to ensure that pupils gain, develop and are assessed in life skills for long learning, as well as competencies for the realization of learners' holistic skills in areas of subject mastery and reading, language, numerical competences, attitudes and life values. However, as articulated in chapter five, none of the private primary schools visited were implementing the thematic curriculum, as English is the official language of communication and instruction. In a recent study conducted to investigate the knowledge and skills assessed at primary level, and their relevancy to the present and future needs of pupils in Uganda, Mitana & Muwaaga (2018) found that assessment takes the form of pen-and-paper tests that measure intelligence somewhat but neglect higher-level thinking and application. They observed that this disadvantages pupils who may be strong in certain other intelligences that are not assessed. Mitana & Miwaaga's observation clearly testifies to the presence of an examination regime where standardised scores constitute the measure for children's academic achievement (DeSaxe, 2015; Giroux, 2015; Hutchings, 2015; Sims, 2017).

In a bid to ensure that pupils are holistically trained, some schools have come up with specific policies to enable pupils to acquire the diverse skills necessary for survival and growth. For example, one of the schools visited had designed and instituted a mentorship and survival skills acquisition policy. In explaining how the policy works, Peter said the following:

“Now that we have a boarding section, all girls must be mentored in that field of domestic chores, like we have matrons who train them in kitchen chores. They are the ones who peel matooke (bananas) we eat, they are the ones who pound the millet that we enjoy – because we take this local millet porridge. So they are the ones who do that one. Even the boys participate in the respective masculine chores; we have demonstration gardens. So it is our policy, every class must participate in that. They have their plots, we have a variety of crops



that we promote – we grow. And at the end of the day, we enjoy because it also constitutes our meals and we can also sell to the trading centre”.

In line with Peter’s idea, Adrine had the following to articulate:

“In this school, children are given a chance to participate in activities that enhance their skills. Because like for a school garden, we have a timetable, when it comes time for gardening, we take children to the garden with the supervision of a school gardener and the teacher who is handling the lesson”.

The above excerpts suggest that schools have instituted effective policies aimed at equipping children with the necessary skills for survival and growth. This helps raise children in a manner that enhances social participation and inclusion in ascribed roles and development initiatives. It is also suggested that the roles children play are selectively allocated, based on the socially ascribed values with respect to gender, age, and a child’s level of development. Moreover, the excerpts depict the role played by a mentor in providing guidance, examples and supervision to ensure that learning does actually take place and children actually acquire the skills. This implies that if pupils are to be mentored in attaining the socially ascribed roles, schools must incorporate children’s participation and engagement strategies for learning in the schools’ operational schedules. This also calls for the allocation of resources to provide inputs for learning, as well as a conducive environment to learn in. In addition, parental support is required, especially when children are at home and during the holidays to supplement what the teachers or mentors at school are able to offer. The issue of policies for enhancing survival skills was addressed in both government and privately owned schools urban schools. A close scrutiny of the skills so emphasised reveals that schools prefer skills that they can benefit from economically. For example, the peeling of *matooke* by learners reduces the cost of labour. The school garden provides a source of food for the entire school which is equally accompanied by monetary benefits for the school. This clearly reflects the profit maximisation function that is a true characteristic of the global neoliberal reforms in service delivery, including education.



Further, in a bid to train pupils holistically, some of the schools visited had started initiatives aimed at raising children in a manner that reflects family relationships and upbringing. Peter explained this undertaking in the following excerpt:

“In general, we also have School Family Initiative (SFI): That one, remember being a boarding house and having children of tender age, we need to have that element of parental care. It is being catered for by teachers here. The headmaster serves as the grandfather and other pupils right away from baby to primary, they are given families under the family teacher. The head of that family is called a family teacher or family head. All those under him, whatever takes place at home is the same thing that takes place here. So what we miss at home, we get it from here. So that is what we call SFI and it has also helped us to curb indiscipline, cater for gender issues, and sincerely, it has helped us to prepare children for national development after school”.

The quotation above suggests that schools are trying to fill the gaps that result from the nature of the current education, especially with regard to pupils who reside at school for the entire term. To cater for parental care and upbringing, the excerpt suggests that every pupil is attached to a school family that serves as a practical home family that provides the necessary ties. The excerpt suggests that the school family aims at providing the guidance necessary for the effective upbringing of a child in a family-oriented and socially accepted manner. It also implies that the family head at school must provide sufficient guidance, care and supervision to ensure that children do not deviate from the family standards. If the strategy of the SFI is to work effectively, then the conduct of teachers as family heads must be exemplary. Thus, the teachers selected as family heads must reflect certain characteristics that fit the ideal of a head of family such as compassion, love for children, age, willingness to serve and so forth.

It should also be noted that differences were identified on the basis of location. Whereas the policies aimed at keeping pupils with diverse skills such as getting involved in household chores existed among urban schools, rural schools did not have any in place. Still, among the urban schools, the policies were only found in the schools that had a boarding section. This may be because of the nature of boarding school life. In fact, none of the rural schools visited had a boarding section and only the urban schools



made provision for meals. Thus, the issue of teaching children household chores was deemed fitting in boarding schools.

4.4 Social responsibility

Further, the study participants revealed that quality education should be the one that is able to provide a service, namely, teaching pupils to become socially responsible by exhibiting the acceptable and expected features of a good citizen and working for the realisation of other people's wellbeing. In expressing this argument, James had this to say:

"... to me, I think quality education it is the service – the good service we give to the children so as to produce good children or good citizens who are socially accepted and can contribute positively to development of the nation".

Mike equally advanced a view that was in harmony with James's by articulating his idea with regard to the school vision. He thus stated:

"... my understanding and going by the school vision, it is to equip my learners with relevant knowledge and skills that are necessary for attaining their personal development and to serve the community. When I have imparted those skills and values, me I know I am providing quality education".

Similarly, Martha was in agreement with the two ideas above when she argued that:

"Actually, quality education, the way I understand that term or that word is getting good education service and how children can extend the good service to other people in future".

The voices in the excerpts above, especially the James', reveal the need for conformity with operational norms that fit the goal of the neoliberals in the quest for development. The notion of creating a massive force of citizens who recognise and conform to rules and regulations as per the prescribed standards is prominent in this regard. Moreover, the excerpts show that participants' understanding of quality education largely relate to knowing, meeting and serving the needs of the community by providing an education service that is relevant. This depicts a dual understanding of



socially responsible education as: (i) the way education conducts itself and the content thereof, which are related to education policies, systems content and the way the teacher trains learners, and (ii) what the pupil is expected to learn and do, which relates to meeting social expectations after the schooling process is complete. Relating quality education to a good service suggests that the teacher must be able to provide the good service first, through classroom instruction, and learners can thus be moulded in a similar direction. This presupposes that as the service demanded changes, the entire education system should also be able to understand and change so as to be able to offer the socially responsible education demanded by society. The findings of the study here coincide with Awhen et al.'s (2014) observation that if education is to be relevant, its role must be emphasised as a conduit for the political, economic, social and technological shifts required to provide requisite services to citizens. Similarly, Ogunwuyi (2010) earlier argued that quality education is an ultimate value required for the provision of social services, as well as a catalyst for social transformation and development.

Although the need for socially responsible education cannot be underrated in the bid to stimulate growth and development, society and the institutions providing education services must put in place systems that nurture the virtue of social responsibility among children. The need for social responsibility regarding the way education conducts itself (Forbes, 2018) is the major reason behind the need for public education. However, with the growth in the league table private primary schools, this reason for public education appears to be dying in Uganda. The current environment in Ugandan primary schools is characterised by early morning classes starting at 7 a.m. as well as late evening classes ending at around 6 p.m. accompanied by homework. Holidays are short, usually three weeks, accompanied by holiday packages (work to be done during the holidays). Thus, it is right to argue that the education calendar and the load that the current primary schools put on children denies them the chance to take part in activities such as home chores, cultivation of crops, attending church services and activities, and so forth. Pupils cannot be expected to learn when they are hungry or be given homework when the environment at home cannot guarantee that the homework can be done effectively. Thus, there is no way an irresponsible education system can create socially responsible children. This calls for effective planning in the way the government conducts its business and how that trickles down to parents and teachers who implement education



interventions in the classrooms. And if education is to contribute towards national development, then learners must be equipped with the necessary skills and should also develop the sense of individual identity and the will to perform certain tasks. Thus, the next sub-theme presents ideas on quality education as empowerment and equipping learners with competitive skills.

4.5 Empowering children with competitive skills

Some participants' views that emerged from the interviews also related quality education to empowerment. It was revealed that empowerment is a tool that enhances one's personal attributes to engage in constructive developmental undertakings, with personal initiative and desire. While articulating how quality education links to empowerment, Alex had the following to say:

“To me, quality education is that one that develops the child’s mind in a way – for instance if you are teaching a child in primary say six, a child learns safety on the road, a child learns how to debate and engage people in a decent conversation, a child learns about occupations such that even if a child does not continue with education in the education line to earn money through a white collar job, he can know occupations like baking, animal keeping, carpentry so that irrespective of getting good aggregates at primary seven, a child is able to sustain his life. I have a feeling that education that is qualitative, is the one which empowers someone to live”.

In support of Alex's idea, Milton stressed his feelings about quality education as empowerment. He put it thus:

“I am not happy when I see primary school graduates fail to speak in public. It raises questions over the future of that child. Can they teach the young ones? Our children should be empowered to speak confidently, do business and convince customers. They should be empowered to feel that they can develop themselves. Quality education should empower children to defend themselves and excel in accumulating wealth”.



It is evident from the above excerpts that teachers viewed quality education from the perspective of enhancing skills and capabilities in learners that are critical to empowering the agency necessary for sustainable growth and development. The excerpts also suggest that learners must be willing and able to make use of the skills learned and acquired while at school. Quality education as an empowerment tool suggests that there must be an environment that facilitates the transfer of knowledge, skills and capabilities from one generation to another and that learners must be willing to stand up for their cause. This perspective of quality education as empowerment would therefore be required to cut across all levels of education to stimulate sustainable development. Alex raises a fundamental idea that the ideal quality education that should be qualitative in nature. Given the current education system in Uganda, this ideal can no longer be cherished. With the focus on performance based on standardised tests and examination scores as a measure of learners' academic achievement, quality education can no longer be realised. Views in the second excerpt suggest that much as teachers understand how quality education should manifest itself, there are cases of inadequacies, characterised by pupils' inability to express themselves, exhibit and benefit from entrepreneurial undertakings as well as training the younger generation. This way, empowerment remains a desired virtue.

In the context of the existing literature, in linking quality education to empowerment, the study findings agree with Ogunwuyi's (2010) idea that quality education has become a conduit for social transformation and development because it is able to empower agents of change and development. And, as Edinyang et al. (2012) emphasise, the value of empowerment emanates from education's capacity to incorporate emancipation, rights and development dynamics in the overall goal for education. I find it prudent to argue that although this deserves the utmost attention, the current neoliberal reforms in education regard it as an agent for wealth accumulation through free market forces in which the most efficient education institutions and successful learners merit the benefits in terms of profits (Giroux, 2015; Pucci, 2015; Ravitch, 2014). This can result in social inequalities and not social transformation and sustainable development.



It was also revealed that if children are to be empowered, they need to acquire competitive skills for survival and development throughout the learning process. Mary raised the argument as in the excerpt below:

“Specifically, we may not aim at nurturing this child to end at primary but we want to play our role very well such that in case maybe something happens and a child stops at primary seven he is able to survive. For instance, maybe I may give you another background like when a child is in primary five, among the topics that a child is supposed to learn is vehicle repair and maintenance. If this child has got money and moved out of school and is on the road, can he replace a tyre on his own. There is print media, check – if you want to hide anything from Africans, put it in writing. Most Africans do not like reading so we find it interesting when we are teaching to teach these children how to read newspapers such that a child is able to read a newspaper because there is a component of letter writing because even when he has stopped at primary seven, he/she can be able to write an application letter to look for a simple job”.

In support of the above idea, Pius added the following:

“The target is to produce quality children, not only just passing exams but children who will even participate in other activities in future like in using manipulative skills to learn. It also includes value in education because ... even if the child is learning and finds problems that will stop him, it does not mean that the child is weak. The child can continue learning other skills that are competitive and give him/her chances to survive”.

The first excerpt suggests that not every learner can complete the formal education cycle, nevertheless it is not only the successful ones in the formal education cycle that should benefit from the acquisition of skills,. The excerpt implies that the daily classroom teaching should incorporate survival skills and how best a child can interface with society in future. The excerpt also suggests that the nature of the social culture can constrain learning and skills acquisition. Thus, education must aim at breaking the socio-cultural barriers that limit learners’ ability to exploit life opportunities.



The second excerpt suggests that there are different ways in which learners can become successful in life, highlighting the need to consider other skills that learners possess, rather than just their ability to excel in tests and examinations. In all, these ideas suggest that teachers' understanding of quality education went beyond academic performance to encompass the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required in the global competitive market, especially for the purposes of survival and the accumulation of resources that foster national development. However, this would suggest an alignment of the curriculum to reflect learning outcomes that are not only oriented to academic scores and standardised pass marks, as well as a shift in the teaching methodologies to reflect prerequisites for education that transcend classroom-based outcomes in the teaching-learning process. To realise the acquisition of competitive skills, standardising the curriculum to match those of other nations for global competitiveness would be an ideal.

The ability to acquire competitive skills as a foundation for quality education is a widely accepted standard (Kulshrestha & Pandey, 2013), as a foundation for success in an era of dynamic engagement and in capitalistic world. Related to the need for competitive skills, Tikly & Barrett (2010) propose a social justice framework based on the three dimensions of good quality education, namely, inclusion, relevance and democracy. Inclusion relates to the way in which various groups of learners may access the quality inputs that may, in turn, enhance the development of their capabilities, overcome the cultural and institutional constraints that impact on the learning of various groups and establish priorities for overcoming such constraints. Relevance refers to the extent to which the outcomes of education are meaningful for all learners, valued by their communities and consistent with national development priorities in a changing global environment. Lastly, democracy addresses the way in which educational stakeholders become engaged in the entire educational process at all levels of governance. Thus, if education is to benefit learners and the nation in a manner that enhances development, those who receive education should emerge with competitive skills that can best position them in an all-round environment.

In a bid to empower learners and equip them with relevant and competitive skills, schools have come up with context-specific policies. The following policies were frequently mentioned: (i) teachers' skills and competencies development programmes



and (ii) mentorship and leadership skills acquisition policies. These are described in more detail below.

Teachers' skills and competencies are of prime importance in the quality generation discourse since they are the ones that implement quality education interventions in the classrooms. To this effect, some schools had put in place policies, programmes and budgetary allocations for training and reskilling teachers. The necessity for such programmes was stressed in different ways. For example Adrine argued:

“From a good teacher, you can get a good pupil – a good teacher can produce a good pupil. This school values teacher training so much. Most of the teachers here have completed degrees and another four are now doing degrees. The school supports them. Because we have to remain ahead and teachers must learn new skills. You know, things keep on changing, even the subject content changes. Teachers who do not upgrade cannot give pupils new skills”.

Adrine's view revealed that teachers' competencies and levels of understanding in a given subject are critical in determining how teachers perform their teaching role. This suggests that the required skills are dynamic and this ultimately requires that skills be constantly honed to match the ever-changing needs of the environment. Thus, to be able to equip pupils with the demanded skills, teachers must update their own understanding and skills. The view suggests that if teachers are well equipped, they can teach and transfer the right skills to learners effectively. This view recognises the centrality of teachers' understanding and practices in the teaching-learning process.

The need for staff development was attested to by all participants in the study as vital for enhancing the skills teachers require for the global development agenda. However, only one private school among the six visited had put in place a staff development programme. Though schools lacked the resources to support teacher development programmes, all teachers interacted with were keen to attend skills development courses. Indeed, across all the schools, participants all mentioned staff development and skills enhancement training as being very useful in equipping teachers with new teaching methods and skills, benchmarking their practices against those of other practitioners and increasing teachers' morale and professional security.



The idea behind the need for teacher development has been echoed by Popova, Evans & Arancibia (2018), who emphasise that teachers are the most significant determinant of student learning and their dearth of modern skills can stifle the entire learning process. The linkage between teacher development and improved student learning has been proved to be a positive one over time. For example in Liberia, the Early Grading Assessment Programme that trains teachers to use an initial reading assessment and to in turn use it to assess learner performance increased learners' reading comprehension by a standard deviation of 0.79 (Piper & Korda, 2011). Teachers who raise learners' scores equally improve the learners' long-term outcomes (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). However, the fact that only one private school was in the sample had put in place a staff development programme implies that the teachers in the other schools may not be able to acquire new skills since their schools simply do not have the resources to support them. This is one of the features of neoliberalism – the private sector operators have the capital, and therefore own the means of production and are better positioned to excel, especially in an environment where market forces determine the production function (Todaro & Smith, 2015). In this context, the schools that can equip their teachers with new and relevant skills will ultimately benefit from the school's improved performance and a steady increase in pupil enrolment (Adawo, 2012; Marnie, 2012).

Another policy that some school had put in place to empower learners with competitive skills was the mentorship and leadership skills acquisition policy. One school had put in place decision-making structures, which incorporated views of the majority stakeholders including the pupils. Peter explained how the policy works as follows:

“Then in decision-making. We also involve students there. We have what we call a co-pupils' parliament and we move up to a national level. We sit down and debate on issues pertaining to school development and national issues, they even give contributions to what should be done and we pick their ideas and discuss and at the end of the day you find that their contributions have in fact dominated whatever work plans and strategic plan we have in the school. This has given them the skill to be confident”.



This excerpt suggests that that individual schools had developed unique strategies aimed at ensuring that children acquire leadership skills critical to the enhancement of their development contribution in future. The excerpt highlights an effort to enhance pupils' communication skills through public dialogues and debates, which increases their confidence levels to interface with different publics. This is a critical resource in negotiation, lobbying and advocacy interventions that can stimulate development. With regard to school categories, this type of effort was only witnessed among urban schools with no difference on the basis of ownership. This could have been attributed to the urban nature of the school, as liberal governance of schools is being increasingly adopted. For example, urban children are becoming more aware of their rights than their counterparts in rural settings.

In the attempt to enhance mentorship and the acquisition of leadership skills among pupils in primary schools, the views agree with Crasborn & Hennissen (2018) observation that mentorship can enhance mentees' skills acquisition especially if the engagement is suitable to mentees current stage of development, otherwise, it may hinder their ability to reach the best level of competence. Crasborn & Hennissen (2018) also emphasise that mentoring should be regarded as a process made up of different variables for the generation of good results. They posit that the process should take cognisance of the content the task is addressing, the style and supervisory skills the mentor uses, the mentor's input especially with initiation, the time aspect and the phases critical to the acquisition of the skill. Accordingly, the excerpts attested to these critical phases in the mentorship cycle.

In the practice context, data from interviews and classroom observations revealed that teachers enhanced pupils' understanding in the classrooms by engaging them in simple topic-focused experiments with the aim of equipping them with practical skills. In explaining how experimentation is used in classroom instruction, Pius made the following comment:

"... then we have experimentation. Children get involved in making their own experiments and they are asked to interpret and explain. Like making a rainbow. They just get water, put it in a bucket, then put a mirror and place it



under the sunshine. Then you see colours changing on a plain paper. And children get interested”.

As the above excerpt shows, teachers were trying to introduce learners to the world of experiments, which have become the best tool for fostering attempts of develop global economies, especially given the increased demand and adoption of technology in human endeavours. The excerpt also suggests that the classroom teacher must be technically trained and skilled to design experiments that can help learners understand and apply concepts with ease. This calls for school management support in terms of providing the required resources. In addition, experiments must be chosen carefully so they are used in subjects and topics where they create a significant impression and are effective. In one of the classrooms visited, there was an old open cupboard containing 10 tins filled with fresh soil. The teachers explained that pupils had planted maize seeds and were watching and documenting any change on a daily basis. I asked why they had not planted the seeds in the gardens since the head teacher had mentioned having a school garden. The teacher responded that that was an experiment meant for pupils to observe the response of plants to light sources.

The views from the interviews and the observation mentioned in the previous paragraph suggest that pupils are likely to learn effectively through the use of experiments in the teaching-learning process. These findings are in line with Zuljan & Vogrinc (2010) who acknowledge the use of experiments in the teaching-learning process. They emphasise that pedagogical innovations in the teaching learning process are critical to the realisation of national development especially in the current globalised economy where technology cannot be underrated. Given the turbulence in technological advancement and constant discoveries in product designs and changes in market demands, the use of experimentation has been proven worthwhile in inaugurating learners in the practice during their early schooling.

Apart from experimentation, demonstration was also revealed to be one of the commonly used methods to deliver lessons in the classroom with aim of equipping learners with practical and competitive skills by orienting to solving problems using practical approaches in real-life situations. The use of demonstration as a teaching method varied according to levels of understanding, application and use. This was



especially so with regard to the nature of the subject and topic taught. Eunice explained this idea as seen in the extract below:

“We use materials to demonstrate. Some come from the ministry and some are made at school. We can make them by using local materials to make alphabetical letters. This helps children, especially in infant classes to memorise letters, then they can write words and thereafter sentences. Children get skills when you demonstrate to them. For example, in social studies, I bring in class roasted ground nuts and give them out to some pupils and tell them to demonstrate and convince others to buy. This empowers them in future”.

Grace explained the use of demonstration as follows:

“Ok, sometimes you cannot be sure of something and then you bring in a resource person. For example, we have a bakery in the neighbourhood and if you have a lesson in baking, you can call a person to demonstrate or take children there. And we also have bicycle and motor vehicle repairs. We have a garage around. We take pupils there and give them to one of the mechanics to take them through”.

In support of the above two ideas, Abbey added:

“A teacher must be practical. What makes a teacher practical? If you are going to teach about a fish, you must have a real one or you cut materials and show them. If you do not have a chart, we have practical work and teachers are creative for example in this school we have a school garden. If you want to teach about plants, you do not bring plants to the classroom. You take children to the garden. If you are teaching about the garden tools, you can demonstrate their use in the garden”.

These excerpts suggest that demonstration is useful method for transmitting knowledge and skills to learners. Through demonstration, pupils are able to master skills and memorise how certain tasks were done by the teacher. Its effective use requires teachers to be competent and to do planning prior to the lesson. It was, however, noted that although the method increases the pupils’ interest in learning, it does require resources



if it is to be used effectively. Accordingly, schools should budget for resources that can be used to facilitate the use of demonstration as a teaching method. The excerpts also suggest that demonstration may not be applicable to all subjects and topics. The teachers must, therefore, be selective when applying this method so that it can be employed effectively. As the excerpts show, there are times when the teacher may not be able to demonstrate themselves and thus use other people outside the school to demonstrate to learners. Though this is a good practice, the teachers should still be able to interpret situations and simplify them for the learners. This calls for a cordial relationship between the school and the community that surrounds it. Despite the fact that participants highlighted the usefulness of this method, I did not observe its use in any of the six classroom observations conducted during the data collection process. When asked why the method was not used, participants gave reasons like lack of resources, time constraints, poor methodological application skills and the nature of the examinable subject content which in effect is predominantly teacher centred.

The lack of use of demonstration in classroom instruction coincided with study findings by Guloba et al. (2010), who, in a study done to ascertain whether teaching methods influence pupils' performance, found out that teachers in primary schools relied heavily on teacher-centred methods which are easy to use in terms of time and cost. This idea is also in line with Sajjad (2010), who links the less use of child-centred methods to lack of relevant and sufficient resources in schools.

From the views presented on this sub-theme, it emerges clearly that some schools especially in the urban environment are trying to empower pupils with the competitive skills required for survival and for the purposes of stimulating national growth and development. In cognisance of this position, I envisage that empowering pupils with skills alone will not guarantee sustainable development; what will make a contribution to national development is the way in which the skills are utilised. This might require working with and through the efforts of other people. Given the current nature of the globalised labour force, characterised by dynamic engagement, there is a need to be able to work with people from different cultures, backgrounds, professions and interests. Hence the need for tolerance, which brings us to the next sub-theme.



4.6 Tolerance

Quality education was also linked to tolerance. Quality education in this regard was defined as an attempt to shape a child's life to live in harmony with other people from different cultural backgrounds. Hence, quality education should be able to teach children to adapt their behaviour to different environments. In explaining this, Andrew had the following to say:

"... for instance in culture, we learn tolerance; say different tribes – these are Bakonjo, these are Bakiga, these are Bahima, Banyankore, but can we live in the same community and in that line, if education can teach tolerance, it means we shall not get people who are outside volatile and negatively aggressive because they know how to tolerate people of different culture and of different age. Specifically that is what we are trying to teach these children irrespective of other challenges that we encounter on our way".

Peace's idea was also in agreement with the above when she explained thus:

"I value education where children have the regard and respect for others. You know, I teach primary one and children in this lower primary can fight a lot. We have a big task of ensuring that we teach them to compromise situations and that fighting is not good at all. Children must tolerate each other's character and live together as brothers and sisters. For me, once I realise that tolerance is attained, I celebrate and that is what education of the young ones should be like".

The views in these excerpts suggest the need to tolerate diverse human standpoints in life in a manner that would allow people to work together to achieve a common objective. This way, education should be able to shape children in such a way as to live in harmony with other people from different cultural backgrounds. For example, two of the schools visited had non-Ugandan pupils, who needed to be accommodated in the daily practices of the school without any form of segregation. It is also suggested that schools and society at large are characterised by people with different characters, some of which may not be good. It is, therefore, the role of education to institute a sense of values that benefit the majority. This calls for institutionalising mechanisms that can



identify and help put right deviant behaviours in society and the earlier it is done among children, the better, as changing at a later age might prove difficult. Quality education from the national development perspective as a way of promoting tolerance was largely emphasised by the urban schools, irrespective of ownership, compared to the rural schools. This can be explained by the nature of urban populations which are cosmopolitan in nature. Rural settings on the other hand tend to have homogenous populations, usually speaking a common language, and learners can identify others through family kinships.

Still, the findings suggest that teachers' understanding of quality education recognises the current globalised economy in which different people from different backgrounds and professional orientations work together. An educated person who fails to fit into the global economic conditions will not meet the requirements for personal and national development. These findings agree with those of Fennell & Arnot (2008) who argue that quality education should be able to generate equitable and sustainable development by addressing national and international constraints, especially those related to multiculturalism, gender, age and diversity, in order to harness enhanced citizenship and nationhood. Zajda (2015) equally recognises the need to address cultural, political and social challenges in a bid to focus on education that can stimulate national development. The findings and literature here presuppose that there should be free movement of the educated labour force from one area to another both at intra and interstate levels.

The need for tolerance had also been raised by Kulshrestha & Pandey (2013). They postulate that in view of the current global dynamics and the adaptability challenges of the 21st century, characterised by dynamic engagement, in terms of which organisations are faced with multiculturalism in the workplace, globalisation and the destabilisation of family systems, it is essential that quality education prepares learners to understand the turbulence of social realities and to develop cognitive qualities such as tolerance and understanding of people from different backgrounds for the purposes of achieving organisational objectives. A lack of tolerance and understanding of people's different standpoints may result in management problems. Individualism will thrive thus hindering teamwork and constraining organisational effectiveness and performance.



In the realm of practice, tolerance as quality education in the national development framework does not have an agreed methodological orientation. The study revealed that every institution has a persona that defines how things are done. This can take the form of the historical orientation, or the cherished values, norms, beliefs, behaviours, artefacts or ways of doing things. The study findings revealed that the schools, in their daily operations, are inclined to act in line with the reason as to why they were founded. It was also revealed that the founding bodies contribute significantly to the strategic direction of schools in terms of decision-making and resource mobilisation, which in turn shape the cultural direction of the schools. The effect was revealed to be both positive and negative in nature. On a positive note, views explaining the contribution of culture as an asset emerged especially when discussing the role of the founding bodies. For example, I reflect on Eunice's words in the excerpt below:

“Eeehh, very much. Members of the foundation body can help us so much. This school has no land. The land belongs to the church. Even within this week, they raised 300,000 Ugandan shillings to help teachers so that they can improve the quality of education, even by making holy Sundays, they help us and pupils spiritually. Much as we are a government school, the rules we follow are guided by the church”.

The above excerpt suggests that the reason as why a school was started and the people behind it can influence the school culture by shaping the strategic direction a school takes. The excerpt further reveals that the founding bodies do a good job by mobilising resources to meet recurring costs in the school, as well as directing the acquisition of socially accepted and moral values critical to a child's growth and upbringing. It is also implied that the founding bodies participate in drawing up the school rules and regulations that govern the conduct of both staff and pupils at the school. This supportive influence enhances internal cohesion and the motivation of staff members. For the pupils of a given school, rules and regulations help neutralise the different individual standpoints and result in harmony and uniformity of action within one operating framework. With this support and influence, these rules and regulations act as norms that govern staff and pupils' behaviour.



By revealing that school culture directs the operations of schools, the study findings confirm Yusof, Osman & Noor's (2016) findings. In a study on school culture and its relationship with teacher leadership, it was found out that there was a strong positive relationship between the school culture and teacher leadership; a factor critical to the achievement of school goals as well as improvement of learners' academic achievements (Harris, 2009). Prokopchuk (2016) also alludes to the fact that the components of culture such as values, mission statements, assumptions and traditions that are passed on from one generation to another have an effect on how pupils, teachers and the entire management work and how the school is run. In a study on school culture and students' academic achievement, Bektas, Karadag, Cogalty & Ay (2015) confirmed that school culture has a statistically significant influence on learners' academic performance. Additionally, the way teachers deliver lessons in class, the dedication learners put into learning and the overall management support to improve the teaching-learning conditions are all influenced by the school culture.

On the other hand, there were expressions of dissatisfaction regarding the school culture, as the dictates of founding bodies can constrain the effective execution of schools' daily activities and management generally. For example, Grace expressed her dissatisfaction with the interference of the founding bodies in the management of primary schools in the following excerpt:

“You can see, for example, management – they just sit in the Church there and simply say you are the chairperson, you are the what, you are the what! And those people may not help much. You find there only one person who is able, the rest you can call them for meetings and they do not come. They do not care because they do not have their children here. And even next year, I do not think they will bring their children here. And they have them but they are in other good schools because they are able to pay. On Wednesdays and Fridays, they have prayers here in the afternoon. The music is at its high level but since we are in the same environment, we have to cope. Sometimes, pupil turn out is low those afternoons. In fact, the relationship is not good”.

This excerpt reflects the undesirable effects brought about by the values the founding bodies incorporate in the management of the daily school activities. The participant



suggests that the school leadership is determined by the church management without due regard and knowledge of other stakeholders; something that results in appointing incompetent individuals to critical managerial positions. This brings perpetuates problems in the schools' normal operations and ends up affecting learners' academic performance. Further, the participant suggests that there are schools operating close to churches. Often, the church that founded a school is housed in the same compound as the schools. As the participant notes, the prayer sessions affect the school's operations particularly on two days of the week. However, since the participant does not indicate forced attendance of prayer sessions, once-off sessions would not significantly affect the normal operations of the school. Rather, it reflects laxity on the part of the school's internal management practices in failing to allocate activities that would not be affected by the noise from the church. The excerpt also suggests that the management team does not care about the learning conditions because the members do not educate their children at the schools.

The excerpt again highlights an inclination towards the neoliberal reform agenda in education in that members of the founding body send their children to other good schools, and not those where they are part of the management team because they are able to meet the cost of education in good private schools. This clearly reflects the effect of market-based (Savage, 2017) principles in determining which schools parents send their children to (Helgoy & Homme, 2016; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2011; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), especially if they can afford the cost. In essence, this reflects the fact that education is a commodity with a number of competitive suppliers and its access depends on the ability to pay.

A close analysis of the excerpts reveals that the participant lacked awareness of the role of founding bodies in the management of schools. Specifically, the fact that management sits in the church and allocates positions exhibited some knowledge gaps. As a matter of fact, all the government-aided primary schools in Uganda are governed by a School Management Committee (SMC) made up of members from various constituencies. For example, as the School Management Committee Handbook (MoES, 2009) states, the SCM is made up of an elected chairperson nominated by the founding body, a local council representative, the sub-county representative, a parents' representative, old boys/girls' representative, teachers' representative and the head



teacher who serves as a secretary (MoES, 2008; Prinsen & Titeca, 2008; Suzuki, 2010). This shows that other than nominating a chairperson, the role of the foundation bodies in the daily primary schools' management should not be significant.

The issue of the schools' cultural attachment to the founding bodies was only manifested in government-aided schools, irrespective of whether they are rural or urban. These are schools that the government took over from churches after the introduction of UPE in 1997. Thus, there is still a lack of harmonisation with the original intentions of setting up such schools and the government's models of operation. The church still feels it has an important bearing on the school while management looks at it from a different perspective.

4.5 Summary of chapter four

In this chapter, data on the understanding of quality education with regard to national development was presented. Quality education is understood as planning for the child's future to be a good and responsible citizen, holistic training, social responsibility, empowerment and equipping the learners with competitive skills and tolerance. The findings agree with the position articulated in the literature review that emphasises that the purpose of education should be in line with the national development goals. Although the findings reveal that this direction has been taken, the critical question that the findings answer is whose national development should education contribute to? As per the study findings, it is clear that education in the current neoliberal reform agenda is aimed at fostering development through the accumulation of wealth by a few private entities, rather than benefiting the majority citizens and for a common good. The understanding of quality education as national development is derived from and anchored on to the national policy documents such as the education policy review commission reports, UPE policy and the ESSP, whose formulation and content have also been influenced by the global neoliberalism reform agenda in education.

The policy documents, especially those on UPE and the liberalisation of the education sector, articulate the need to increase access to education as a way of increasing the acquisition of skills critical to national growth and development. However, the actual practice signifies the government's effort to abdicate this responsibility to the private education service providers, whose objective is rather private capital accumulation and



the creation of employees who merely do the job without questioning the employer. The teachers' classroom practices, therefore, aim at the realisation of this objective, guided by academic performativity. This trend is thus creating social and economic inequalities by making education a commodity that can be accessed through the competitive market forces, hence accessed only by those who can afford the price. This is a threat to equitable and sustainable development.



CHAPTER FIVE

QUALITY EDUCATION AS STANDARDS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, findings on the understanding of quality education with regard to national development were presented, showing the influence of the global neoliberalism reforms in the national development interventions and processes. This chapter progresses from chapter four, presenting findings on the understanding of quality education from the perspective of standards. The linkage between chapter four and five is that with the neoliberalism reforms, education has resorted to the use of standards as a means of getting the best graduates who can perform certain jobs in the best manner possible without any form of inefficiency. The standards and targets set are accordingly used as a measure of success or failure. To this effect, therefore, this chapter presents participants' views on the understanding of quality education from a standards perspective, how teachers practise quality education and why teachers practise quality education the way they do within the standards framework.

The data were generated using interviews, classroom observations and document analysis, especially of the existing policies on quality education. The views generated were synthesised and presented under three sub-themes, namely, academic achievement and standards, attainment of the best grades and the achievement of school goals. The presentation is foregrounded in the neoliberalism reform agenda and an attempt is made to draw comparisons between the different school categories that were involved in the study. When presenting the findings in this chapter, I not only concentrate on the standards that pupils are expected to attain but also those that affect and direct teachers' practice as they generate quality education in the classrooms. The generation of quality education has, therefore, been looked at from the entire teaching-learning process.

5.2 Academic achievement and standards

During the interviews that were conducted the participants were requested to state how they understood quality education with regard to standards. The elicited responses reveal that quality education is understood from the perspective of pupils' academic achievement in terms of a given set of standards. Participants related academic achievement to the realisation of both short and long-term academic goals that start with understanding from the classroom up to a level where a child can utilise the



acquired knowledge and skills to contribute toward improved societal welfare in a manner that is socially accepted. A number of the responses received correspond to this notion of quality education as academic achievement and standards. For instance, in explaining this view, Abbey had the following to say:

“At any level of education, there is what we call qualifications. When people qualify, it means they have the credits to see them to be worth of what they are supposed to be. For example, if one qualifies as a doctor, society expects that person to behave and practise in a manner that fits the profession and he should do the job by using the acquired knowledge and skills from school”.

Peter gave a similar view:

“The pinnacle of why institutions are established is academic achievement much as people interchange it with academic performance. It is true that academic performance is important but I cannot keep around a child who gets distinctions but is badly behaved. You see, there are primary school pupils who sneak out of schools, go to bars and drink. The other week they hit someone’s car with a stone, broke the glass and ran away. And when such happens, the public judges the school badly. Our standards here must focus on what the learner is able to do”.

The views in the above excerpts suggest that participants considered societal expectations to be an academic achievement that should be realised following a set of standards that are inherent in the teaching-learning process. The excerpts imply that learners should be able to exhibit qualities and behaviours that fit within the socially accepted norms; hence, the socially accepted norms constitute a set of accepted standards. Consequently, the knowledge and skills acquired should temper and regulate the conduct of pupils without them having to be reminded of what is right or wrong. The excerpts also articulate the use of the knowledge acquired in the classroom in carrying out the socially ascribed roles attached to education in the various professions. It is equally implied in the excerpts that society and/or institutions should not tolerate individuals who fail to exhibit the characteristics that society accepts and approves of. More importantly, quality education as emerging from the second excerpt, implies that



learners should enhance and protect the image of the institutions at which they study as their behaviour in society reflects on them and can be constructive or destructive to the school image even after they have graduated from such schools. In all, the understanding of quality education, as depicted by the participants these excerpts, focuses not only on the process of learning but also on the long-term outcomes and the impact of learning. Moreover, the standards pertain not only to the learners but also to the teachers. To this effect, standards that pertain to teachers' work and their effectiveness are also of importance.

The data from the document analysis supported the views articulated in the interviews. It was found out that like any other profession, in an effort to regulate the conduct of school managers and teachers, the Ministry of Education and Sports has put in place the Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct. As the Republic of Uganda (2009) points out, the Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct articulates what is expected of teachers during their term of service by enlisting standards in the teaching profession regarding (i) membership, (ii) the teachers' responsibility with regard to the child's learning, (iii) professional responsibility, (iv) the teacher's personal conduct, (v) the role of the head teacher, (vi) the community and how the teacher is expected to relate to the community and (vii) the enforcement of the code. The enforcement of this code of conduct is provided for by the Education Service Commission Regulations under statutory instrument 2012, No 51. Specifically, the Education Service Commission Regulations (The Republic of Uganda, 2012) provides a guiding framework for teachers' practice and cases of misconduct. It prohibits teachers from conducting themselves in a manner that constrains them from conducting their duties. According to the Education Service Commission Regulations (The Republic of Uganda, 2012, pp. 12–13), a teacher is guilty of misconduct if he or she conducts himself or herself in any manner prejudicial to the good image and reputation of the Government or the Education Service, does not observe punctuality or is absent from duty without permission, is lazy or produces work of a poor standard or fails to meet set time lines, allows, abets, or procures malpractices in institutional and public examinations, discriminates against learners with special learning needs and physical disabilities, falsifies records and documents and engages in private interests at the expense of his or her official duties.



The Education Service Regulation therefore specifies professional standards that should govern the teachers as they execute their roles and thus generate quality education in the classroom. The regulation in this regard therefore stands out as an acceptable framework in terms of which teachers' conduct can be assessed.

To further strengthen standards to guide teachers' professional service, there are standard guidelines that operationalise the Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct. These are articulated in the *Handbook on Teacher/Instructor/Tutor Education & Training Policies* (The Republic of Uganda, 2010b). Specifically, the objectives of the handbook are (i) to raise stakeholders' awareness about the existing policies on education, as well as the requirements and management of the teaching profession, and (ii) to provide a practical and reliable central faculty of all policies that stipulate teachers' pedagogical requirements. These standards constitute the foundation for judging a teacher's ability to stimulate learners' academic achievement in terms of societal expectations.

The study participants were aware of the existence of the Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct (The Republic of Uganda, 2009) and as well as the *Handbook on Teacher/Instructor/Tutor Education & Training Policies* (The Republic of Uganda, 2010) as standards that guide the management of schools by spelling out teachers' welfare concerns as well as professional standards and requirements. The following excerpts reveal participants' awareness and application of the teachers' professional code of conduct. For example, John said:

We have the code of conduct. It provides the standards and guidelines that each must follow. If you cannot follow you look for alternatives. We also have to know the teacher-parent relationship.

On the other hand, Adrine put it this way:

“... like as staff, we have procedures that we use: One; a teacher to go to class must have made a scheme of work which must guide him as a professional, two; he must have a lesson plan on a daily basis so that what you are going to teach is on the plan so that you do not go and begin repeating yesterday's lesson. So the lesson plan guides you. You must have a register to record the children so



that you know who has come and who has not. In case of any problem, you are aware, so if a child came from home and was kidnapped on the way, the register will tell you that this child did not arrive”.

These responses suggest that teachers are expected to follow their professional guidelines in their daily conduct and whoever does what is not befitting of the profession should leave, as such misconduct affects not only the individual involved but also the entire profession. This way, a good teacher is the one who is obedient to authorities and maximises efficiency. The standard guides are also in place to regulate teachers’ behaviours and conduct towards both the pupils and society at large. The views in the excerpts also suggest that the standard guidelines must be followed at all times not only to control the conduct of classroom lessons, but also to take responsibility for leadership in serving the interests of professional stakeholders and society. The standards contained in the policy documents bind all teachers irrespective of school category, providing strategic guidelines for those who practise in the teaching profession.

However, much as the policy documents and participants’ views suggest that the policy guidelines are instituted to regulate the teachers’ conduct, adherence to the policy is sometimes flawed. During the data collection exercise, it was noted that teachers were not acting in accordance with the code of conduct. One teacher was found wearing slippers and it appeared their normal practice. Attempts to find out why he was doing this in contravention of the code of conduct, the head teacher put the blame on government’s failure to pay teachers a reasonable salary or give them corporate wear. The issue of inappropriate attire was only observed in a government-aided school. Teachers in the private schools, both urban and rural, were all neatly dressed in corporate wear, labelled with the school badge. This illustrates the difference in dress code among the school ownership categories. The issue of standards and the flaws that emerged could be attributed to the neoliberal agenda that champions individualism at the expense of collective agency which regulated the conduct of teachers in the past. The ultimate focus by education managers on pupils’ achieving high grades is illustrative of the neoliberal education discourse.



The emerging perception that teachers should behave in a certain manner that reflects their educational achievement is characteristic of the neoliberalism reform agenda in education. As Lipman (2013) argues, neoliberalism has affected all spheres of human life including the social aspect. In a way, as Lipman argues, neoliberalism aims to reconstruct social values, relations and identities, thus creating a way of thinking in terms of which people must behave and think in a certain manner that should become the only workable alternative.

With regard to practice, the study generated data to ascertain exactly how teachers were practising quality education in the classrooms, which it was believed would in the long run lead to academic achievement. During the interviews, it was revealed that teachers use group discussion and the think-pair-share method. It was revealed that for the purposes of ensuring that pupils learn better and cater for time-takes (pupils who take long to understand in class), teachers form discussion groups in which pupils share in plenary sessions. In an attempt to explain how the method is used in classroom instruction, Pius highlighted the rationale for group discussions and think-pair-share methods in the excerpt below:

“... then we have group work. I think that one cuts across all subjects. So when you are dealing with children who may be confused, you come up with those who have not grasped the content and assign them groups with those who have understood to discuss. I think it goes hand in hand with discussion. Because they are talking about a certain task and discuss”.

Specifically, for the case of the think-pair-share method, Andrew explained its application and use:

“... here you pair the children to share a thought and thereafter, they share among the whole class. I have given you a challenging question and I say you two discuss it at your table level. You discuss it at table level, thinking together, then share what you have and then you bring it now to the class and present”.

The excerpts above suggest that teachers were doing a good job of encouraging pupils to think for themselves in order to arrive at alternative solutions to various problem



situations and tasks. By putting learners into groups, teachers were not only focusing on how pupils arrive at the right answer but also how pupils who understand the concept can explain it to their classmates. Also, pupils are encouraged to generate their own ideas creatively and package them in a way that can be understood by others. This implies assessing how pupils can accommodate and respect other people's opinions. It also implies that teachers should observe and guide pupils' communication skills, especially language use, so as to guide the type of communication that is accepted in a given society. Ideally, this also constitutes a foundation for shaping the way that pupils interact with the general public in future, hence accomplishing academic achievement and standards in a predetermined manner. This is aimed at fostering compliance with the set standards and maximising the profits of the various private owners of education institutions.

The study findings suggest that pupils are more likely to learn effectively from their peers, who are able to explain using words they understand, than a teacher. A similar idea is advanced by Annamalai, Manivel & Palanisamy (2015) in a study on students' perspectives on small group discussion in India. It was observed in the study that discussions enhance a synthesis of the material and increase retention of what is learnt. Specifically, the study found out that the discussions were helpful in the following ways: They helped learners explore different perspectives on their own which enhanced creativity, increased ownership of learning as the method is child-centred, deeper understanding, active participation and helped enhance learners' communication skills. Dudley-Marling (2013) attests to the fact that group discussions are a measure of student achievement, especially when the teacher is able to standardise and categorise ideas raised by learners in the discussion groups. It is critical to note that for a teacher to use discussion groups, he/she needs to first understand that at least some pupils have understood. This implies a selective attempt to formulate groups to ensure that at least one pupil has a clear understanding in each and every group. In all this, there is an element of a pre-determined end result that teachers focus on achieving.

The views presented on quality education as academic achievement fall within the framework of attracting the public in a competitive environment and concur with Aggarwal & Goodell (2016), who observe that teaching is an input to the realisation of targeted achievement, which reinforces and directs pupils' learning. In this regard, as



CEDEFOP (2016) articulates, the learner outcomes should inform education sector policy formulation, as well as the engagement of stakeholders, because they are the ones who do actually confirm the realisation of the final achievement. A similar idea regarding the usefulness of learning outcomes as a measure of learners' academic achievement has been raised by Gallavara et al. (2008), who point out that if society is to benefit from the learning process, there should be clear learning outcomes and appropriate criteria as well as methodologies to link what is expected of a learner in terms of knowing, understanding and applying the acquired knowledge and skills based on the education level in a given education system. This connects to education standards in the global neoliberalism reform agenda.

Conclusively, it should be realised that the need to train pupils within a framework that society finds acceptable is a clear manifestation of the neoliberal reform agenda in education, where individual conformity with the authorities is regarded as the realisation of the set academic standards that are translated into work performance even after the schooling process is complete. Both the curriculum and training generally aim at the creation of a labour force that must conform to the prevailing norms. This requires developing a system that progressively reaches out to the majority of citizens and orients their thinking to the acceptance of the existing norms. As Giroux (2015) puts it, predetermining high levels for learners' academic achievement in the neoliberal reform agenda is aimed at producing graduates through "a pedagogy of ignorance whose hidden curriculum is the teaching of political and intellectual conformity" (Giroux, 2015, p. 15). This has enhanced employers' quest for graduates who do a job in a defined and accepted way without asking questions, and who obey orders (Ayers & Ayers, 2011; Hinchey, 2008). Sims (2017, p. 3) refers to this as "increased compliance enforcement through the education sector" which has resulted in a work climate that does not accommodate principles of tolerance, freedom and debate.

5.3 Attainment of the best grades

Views generated from interviews revealed that some participants understood quality education as pupils' ability to attain the best score and subsequently the best grades on standardised tests and examinations. In explaining this orientation of quality education, Esther mentioned the following:



“... if a child is in a primary school, to leave the primary education level in Uganda that child must attain at least aggregate 28. But still, aggregate 28 is not quality education because that is the last mark. We aim at getting 4 aggregates or at least not more than 12 aggregates because division one ends at 12 aggregates”.

In agreement with Esther’s idea, Peace explained in detail how the best grades mean quality education. Her views are captured in the excerpt below:

“My understanding of quality education, in this set up of a private school; one is that the school must be performing very well academically. We all want our pupils to be in the fours’ club³, that is when the school can be on the map. Also, the teachers must be qualified to handle the children well such that they produce quality work in education. So, the first academic performance comes from the teacher. When you are teaching the right content to the child, then the child will also use the right content to perform and excel. If you give a wrong content, then it means you are sending out a half-baked child”.

The excerpts suggest that quality education was looked at from the perspective of learners’ ability to perform excellently and get the best mark in all four subjects that are examined. Moreover, the views show that schools have come up with operational practices aimed at enhancing academic excellence. For example, the practice of constituting and distinguishing school-based academic clubs is a manifestation of encouraging academic competition among pupils, precipitated by the neoliberal reform agenda in education. This has led to the transformation of education into an individual

³ The Fours’ Club is a commonly used term in Ugandan primary schools to mean a group of pupils who have exhibited consistency in getting four aggregates. They constitute the best performers and are usually put in the same stream. Often times, schools recognise them and give them prizes for excellent performance.



good or service that schools offer. And access to this good depends on one's ability, in terms of effort expended, to obtain the service. The views in the excerpts also highlight the relevancy and centrality of a classroom teacher in ensuring that learners do actually excel. When teachers are knowledgeable and skilled, they are deemed to convey the right skills to learners and the reverse is also believed to be true. The excerpts also point out that teachers can give incorrect content to learners. The views imply that if pupils are to excel academically, schools should aim at recruiting the best teachers to constitute a firm foundation for the teaching-learning process.

Another pertinent point raised in the excerpts is the mode of assessment and grading. The study generated views regarding how pupils were assessed and graded to determine the best and worst mark. In a bid to understand how pupils were assessed, views on this were sought. Across all the schools visited, participants attested to the use of standardised modes of assessment and grading. Some of the views in this regard were captured. For example, Pius explained as in the excerpt below:

“For assessment, when pupils report, they just go to class for some weeks, then we subject them to a certain test, then they are subjected to another one in the middle of the term, and at the end of the term, they do end of term final exams. So those are three gazetted exams and make an average of what one has scored. Even if a pupil fails to sit for an exam at the end of the year, we still refer to the gradual performance”.

Views from Reality primary school, as raised by Alex, contained the following:

“... for us when we are promoting a learner, we have a pass mark. A person to qualify to be promoted from a class to another, at least, must be a half of the percentage in every paper. That is 50%? And those ones below, automatically repeat. Those whose parents insist they get promoted, for us, the way we do it, we cannot say we shall follow the parents' protocols. We just say if you cannot accept, if you cannot abide by the rules and regulations of the school, then it means you are supposed to take your kid away”.

It is suggested from the excerpts above that some schools were using accommodative



modes of assessment that were progressive in nature. This would help to assess a child's academic performance throughout the term. This can be useful for assessing where a child has a weakness and address it before the final examination. In all assessment modes, scores were used as a standard assessment criterion. Assessments ranged from classroom exercises to gazetted examinations at mid-term and at the end of term. Moreover, promotion from one class to another was guided by a set standard mark, usually an average, with 100 as the highest mark and zero as the lowest in all the four subjects examined (English, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies) at primary school level.

Importantly, the excerpts point out that some schools were making the weak children repeat classes on the basis of their average marks, the argument being that they did not meet the required pass mark. This was a practice among private schools, both in the rural and the urban environment. This can be attributed to the high competition among schools and the fact that promoting a weak child to another class would increase the school's probability of getting poor grades at the end of the national primary examinations, thereby spoiling the school's public image. On the whole, this practice contravenes the Ugandan national UPE policy that stipulates automatic promotion from one class to another until the primary education cycle is complete. With regard to the government-aided schools, it was pointed out that school management usually advises weak pupils to repeat and parents make the final decision in this regard.

A review of documents, for example the UNEB examination assessment policy, attested to the use of a standardised score and grading system. This guides marking and grading of the primary leaving examinations done at the end of primary seven. By implication and in practice, all primary schools use the UNEB standardised grading criteria. This is summarised in Table 5.1.



Table 5.1: Ugandan national grading criterion for primary schools

Mark out of 100	Aggregate
90 and above	D I
80–89	D 2
70–79	C 3
65–69	C 4
60–64	C 5
50–59	C 6
45–49	P 7
35–44	P 8
34 and below	F 9

D means distinction, C credit, P pass and F failure.

Table 5.1 gives a summary of the UNEB standard scoring and grading criteria, with the first column showing the absolute mark and the second column showing the aggregates. The aggregates are the ones used to categorise pupils into divisions, with division one as the best and division U or ungraded as the worst. The standard national framework for divisions is presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Categorisation of divisions in the Ugandan primary education sector

Aggregates	Division
4–12	One
13–24	Two
23–30	Three
31–33	Four
34–36	U (Ungraded)

Table 5.2 indicates that the best mark a pupil can get is aggregate 4 with a distinction in all four subjects and the worst performance is aggregate 36 with F 9 in all four subjects. By national standards, the assessment criterion is guided by a mark set by the Uganda National Examinations Board as mandated by the UNEB Act (1983). The Act empowers the examination committees, among other things, to (i) recommend people to set, moderate, invigilate, supervise and mark examinations, and (ii) ensure that



standards are maintained with regard to subjects taken and to the candidates taking the examinations, as well as grading. By implication, all primary schools should follow the UNEB grading criteria to prepare pupils for the final examinations. Whilst this provides a uniform mode of assessment, schools and the entire teaching process concentrate on training pupils to gain distinctions and be ranked highly. This has led to the neglect of other learning domains that are critical for learners' growth and development. On the other hand, the document analysis and interviews revealed that schools only follow the national grading criteria for national examinations. Parallel grading formats were found to be set by individual schools, districts and dioceses, especially in the church founded schools. A common feature among all these different grading formats was that assessment levels were higher than the national grading criterion. This is because schools want to set a higher standard to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged at the national level.

A review of the policy documents further revealed that in the bid to ensure standards in the teaching-learning process, the government issues a standardised curriculum spearheaded by the National Curriculum Development Centre Act 1973. The act legally provides for the establishment of the National Curriculum Development Centre to oversee the design of an appropriate instructional curriculum, depending on the required national training needs, nature of training and national education levels in the Ugandan education sector. It is also mandated to make provisions for the actual implementation of the national curriculum, including the training materials, assessment modalities and all related management aspects thereof. All participants involved in the study expressed awareness of the existence and functionality of the national curriculum. Some of the views regarding participants' levels of awareness of the national curriculum are presented in the excerpts below. For example, Martha argued:

“We have the curriculum – the national curriculum for each class. Then we have textbooks that we use in class in conjunction with the curriculum. It is this curriculum that every school, every head teacher and teacher must follow. Even we people running private schools must follow that curriculum. It spells out the standards that we must recognise and meet as we train children. We follow the curriculum. That one, we must because in making a scheme, that one is made



tallying with the curriculum. That means, to make a scheme and a lesson plan, you must be having curriculum”.

Alex also pointed out the following:

“Now, when the government noticed there were problems in numeracy (numbers) and literacy (understanding), the government put in place thematic curriculum (according to study themes) and sorely, teaching here is done in a language that is understood in that particular area. Even when you put it at your own level, when you want to speak, you first conceptualise it in your local language. With a thematic curriculum, a child is able to understand from the context first and this helps produce quality education”.

The excerpts above suggest that there is a policy attempt to institute and use a harmonised framework in the teaching-learning process. Teachers were using the standard curriculum for classroom instruction. In ideal practice, what teachers deliver in class in terms of content and the methods they use to deliver lessons and assess pupils are all contained in the national curriculum. The excerpts also suggest the current primary school curriculum involves an attempt to progressively introduce the young learners to the formal education process for the purposes of increasing pupils’ early literacy by using the local languages as a medium of instruction during the first three years of formal primary education. It is also apparent from the excerpts that teachers base their daily and monthly teaching plans on the curriculum. The curriculum should be followed by each and every school irrespective of ownership and location.

Indeed, the Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC, 2006a) is in agreement with the views stated in the excerpts above. In spelling out the thrusts of the thematic curriculum of 2006, the NCDC (2006a) points out the following three aspects: (i) the development of learning themes of numeracy, literacy and life skills in the first three years of primary education, (ii) enhancement of understanding and use of concepts in a manner that learners adopt easily and use in their daily life, and (iii) the use of language that learners are already proficient at. This is done in a manner that positions the learner at the centre of the teaching-learning process by enhancing classroom interactions, the use of material that children relate to, and recognising that children



have an influence in the learning process as well as allowing them to do so (NCDC, 2006a). Teachers were operationalising the curriculum in their classrooms by making use of daily training timetables and termly schedules. Adherence to the national curriculum is a concern for all schools in the country and its effective use, therefore, would imply uniform teaching regarding the content and methods. However, participants seemed sceptical about the effectiveness of the curriculum as they pointed out that it does not address the specific learning needs of students.

However, the curriculum standards have caused confusion in practice. For example, in all the private schools visited, English is the official language of communication and instruction and the government has not thus far condemned the practice. The government-aided primary schools that are implementing the thematic curriculum do not understand its intention as they did not participate in its design process. Accordingly, the study participants expressed their dissatisfaction over the government's failure to consult them during the curriculum design process. Upon being asked whether they had taken part in or were consulted during the design of the current primary school thematic curriculum, John responded thus:

“Participating in making the curriculum? Haaaaha, No. We follow it. It comes directly from the Ministry to the school and then we enhance it in the classroom by the teacher. We only implement, we are the conveyor”.

More views from Glory confirmed the lack of participation in curriculum design. This is confirmed in the quote below:

“For the government policy, they want us to follow their curriculum. That comes from the ministry and that is what we adopt in teaching. I think the schools cooperate as we are expected to effectively implement it the way it is”.

The above views suggest that the national curriculum design process in Uganda does not consider the interests and views of stakeholders, especially classroom teachers. This reduces their levels of ownership and involvement in realising the stated objectives of the curriculum. There was a feeling that the government was imposing the curriculum onto schools and teachers for implementation. This position did not have any bearing on



the school categories involved in the study. Their position and attitude to the design of the current primary school curriculum was not a good one, especially given the fact that the effectiveness and success of any teaching-learning intervention greatly depends on how classroom teachers understand, support and implement it. A document analysis revealed that although there were attempts to consult education stakeholders including teachers (Penny et al., 2008), the consultations were superficial. Among the 122 districts (MoES, 2017) only 11 were reached out to, targeting only 90 of the 22,600 primary schools (EMIS, 2014) in Uganda. Writers such as Mwesigye (2015) candidly attest to the fact that some teachers have no clear understanding on how the thematic curriculum should be implemented. He also observes that some private schools are reluctant to implement the curriculum. This situation is creating confusion as private schools that do not follow the curriculum closely continue to excel in standardised exams. The curriculum content fails to offer learners practical skills and concentrates on assessment based on scores, something that has negatively affected the quality of education.

It is clear from the findings that with the adoption of the global neoliberal policies in education, the government simply sets the standards and controls from a distance by holding individual schools and stakeholders accountable by using the overall academic scores. Specifically, by revealing that some schools have not implemented use of the mother tongue in classroom instruction, the findings agree with past researchers. Mwesigye (2015), for example, found that private schools in Uganda were not following the thematic curriculum, arguing that it was not addressing the acquisition of skills required in the job market. More research findings have indicated that teaching pupils in their mother tongue has not been successful in Uganda due to community attitudes towards its use. The feeling is that its mastery has no benefit in terms of future employment opportunities (Tembe & Norton, 2008). Ssentanda (2013) found that classroom teachers believed that the mother tongue limits pupils' comprehension in English and negatively affects their performance at the end of the primary level. Consequently, some teachers preferred not to waste time on teaching a subject that would not be examined at the end of the primary school cycle. What remains unclear is whether the government is aiming at setting standards to ruin the education sector or if the standards are only applicable to the government schools. With the current thematic



curriculum and implementation differences among schools, the primary school education sector cannot generate quality education.

Further, emanating from the national curriculum the data from the document analysis also revealed that teachers' classroom practices were guided by the national school calendar that scaled down the national curriculum into manageable tasks in the form of learning terms and spelling out what to cover in each term. During the data collection exercise, I was able to access and analyse the national school calendar for the 2018 academic year. This calendar spelt out the opening and closing dates for each term for all training institutions (MoES, 2017). The national school calendar has a compliance note that reads:

“Compliance to the calendar is supposed to be mandatory. This calendar must be complied with by all Education Institutions (Government and Private). No holiday teaching should take place in any institution. Violation of this calendar will call for disciplinary action against errant head teachers/schools” (MoES, 2017, p. 10).

The presence of the national school calendar with clear opening and closing dates suggests good practice that standardises the training schedule for all schools. The note on the calendar suggests that school managers must ensure that they do not deviate from the stipulations of the calendar and whoever does so is supposed to be apprehended. This would imply instituting a regulation or strong supervisory and monitoring system to identify school managers who deviate from the norm. However, nothing to serve this purpose has been put place. On the other hand, though the standard national calendar aims at creating uniformity in training and in completing the syllabus, it does not take into account the specific and unforeseen needs of schools and as such may be tantamount to intended and unintended violations. For example, when I tried to ask when the term was scheduled to end, one of the six head teachers interviewed mentioned a date that was in fact a week before the official closure. In an attempt to find out why they were intending to close early, it was revealed that the school was a marking centre for the joint primary six exams and, thus, had to close early to make space for the joint marking to take place. Such occurrences imply that learners may be greatly disadvantaged as they may not be able to complete the syllabus, or if they do,



they are rushed and may not grasp the content as stipulated by the standards. This study poses a question regarding the government’s intention regarding standards and who should actually follow them. In practice, much as standards are meant to regulate the conduct of all schools, they advantage the private schools rather than their counterparts in the government sector. With reduced government expenditure on education, government schools cannot afford to put in place a conducive teaching-learning environment. Private schools, on the other hand, can invest in procuring the necessary teaching-learning aids as well as a conducive environment that can stimulate better academic scores. This translates to increased pupil enrolment and finally a bigger profit margin. With this form of neoliberalism, it is clear that unless there is regulation of the standards followed by all schools, some schools will always focus on the end results in form of academic scores.

To operationalise the national curriculum and calendar, it was noted that individual schools and teachers are required to spell out their action plans in their schemes of work. The scheme of work eventually acts as a guide for designing lesson plans. One of the schemes of work accessed during a classroom observation, that of Anne, focused on items indicated in section 5.3.

Table 5.3: A structure of the scheme of work

Week	Lesson	Unit/ Period	Topic	Specific objectives	Content	Methods	Learners’ activities	Aids	Reference	Remarks

Anne also indicated that the scheme of work guided the development of lesson plans, explaining that without a scheme of work, one cannot derive a lesson plan. Anne’s scheme of work, as indicated in Table 5.3, is an effective tool for planning and can help improve the teaching-learning process if well applied. This suggests that there should be a mechanism for ensuring that the scheme of work is adhered to. For example, Anne’s has been signed by the head teacher and bore the school stamp, implying that it had been approved by the head teacher. The use of schemes of work and lesson plans suggests that teachers plan their content and tailor the delivery approaches to the needs of the learners. However, two teachers of the six teachers whose lessons were observed



were found to be without a lesson plan. This pointed to the fact that much as teachers are aware of the usefulness of the schemes of work and lesson plans, they do not always use them. Accordingly, as Adrine highlighted, there is a need to intensify teacher supervision:

“They should be strict on the teachers especially the head teachers are never in offices, and thus, the supervision is less. Teachers in government schools are doing things on their own and there is no follow up. So rules and regulations must be put in place to control the laziness in the government schools so that they can improve there to compete with private schools”.

This excerpt draws out two critical aspects: lack of adherence by teachers to the standards that guide teaching and specifically lesson delivery, and laxity on the part of government officials and school managers to effectively supervise teachers. Indeed, as revealed in the excerpt, the observation results confirm the fact that the two teachers who did not have a lesson plan were from the government-aided schools rural schools. This could have been due to the fact that the district education administrators and inspectors find it easy to make impromptu visits to urban schools but not to those in rural areas. Thus teachers in urban schools tend to make sure they are not caught out while their counterparts in rural schools are not as careful. On a negative note, the views suggest that much as teachers understand the usefulness of lesson plans, they do not always comply. This implies that they teach without a guide, something that is detrimental to pupils’ effective learning as it is prone to cause variations in syllabus coverage, the taught content, assessment methods and overall learner achievements. Overall, the findings highlight the need to monitor and supervise teachers effectively to ensure that lessons are delivered in line with the standardised plan and set standards.

The existing policies regarding the use of standards in Uganda cannot generate quality education. The two existing policies with regard to the realising the best grades, that is, the UNEB grading and assessment criteria and the national curriculum, in their current state cannot guarantee quality education as they are not in harmony. Whereas the former articulates the standard pass mark, the curriculum that should refine the processes of realising the end results is lacking in terms of the methodological



prerequisites for realising the best grades. For example, the current thematic curriculum that teaches pupils based on themes that are not examined at the end of the primary school cycle is regarded as a waste of time. Teaching learners in a local language has also been a constraint to effective learning due to cases where pupils in the same school speak many different languages. And due to the prevailing competition in the education sector, as a result of the neoliberal reform in education, schools that have the capacity to exploit all means that the market offers will do so. This ends up creating social inequalities and pupils who go through the less able schools will end up failing at school and failing to find a job, thus perpetuating the cycle of inequality. On the other hand, pupils who go through the better facilitated schools have more opportunities of excelling, obtain better jobs and, thus, are likely to succeed in life.

Concerning how teachers practised quality education in the classrooms, data generated attested to the use of explanation, questions and answers in the teaching-learning process. In all the schools visited, participants acknowledged the use of explanation as the most commonly used method in the teaching-learning process. To generate good results, it was further revealed that a teacher should ask questions related to the subject matter to ascertain pupils' levels of understanding. The questions asked are within a confined framework that must articulate the standards set by the national policies for education. In explaining the use of the explanation method, Mary said the following:

“There is explanation. As a teacher you must explain to pupils what you are teaching them and employ good examples to make them understand. Teachers should not leave class before evaluating the lesson. So we ask questions and give exercises that are marked. Those who get the numbers right, they have understood and those who fail, you tell them to do corrections”.

The above idea is in line with Patrick's when he says:

“We have explanation which is direct and easy to use and as you explain, you encourage pupils to participate. They get involved in constructing sentences by participating. And as a word is learnt, they make use of it so as to improve on the vocabulary. It is effective. Of course there are side effects but to a



minimum. To a minimum level for example, some of the words are hard to pronounce and use but in reading if they cannot, they earn no marks”.

The above views suggest that explanation as a teaching method may be the most effective method in the framework of education standards especially if the teacher has good communication skills. The method is also straightforward in application and use as it may not require specific resources. The views in the excerpts above imply that teachers need to plan their lessons so as to deliver them in a manner that can facilitate pupils' understanding. It is also implied that each lesson should be assessed to ascertain learners' levels of comprehension of topics taught. Such marks awarded are an indicator of the inclination to use standardised scores. Still, within the standards framework, the views suggest that the use of explanation requires prior standard setting if the teacher is to evaluate the lesson effectively. Moreover, the use of questions, answers and class exercises points to the fact that learners' responses are assessed on the basis of pre-set standards that help quality a right or wrong answer. The teacher must be proficient to determine the right sentence, specifically following the rules and standards of English sentence construction. For all the classroom observations conducted, the use of explanations, questions and answers was prominent irrespective of the school category.

The use of explanations, questions and answers, as participants pointed out, agrees with past research findings. For example, Odora (2014) maintains that explanation as a teaching method has been used for a long time, is the most commonly used teaching method and is central to all teaching-learning circumstances. When learners provide their own explanations, they learn effectively and get closer to real-life situations (Williams & Lombrozo, 2010). However, Odora (2014) cautions against the overuse of explanation. He observes that the method is greatly constrained by teachers' inability to effectively communicate and deliver the subject matter they have in various disciplines. This calls for the use of the method to be enhanced by teacher training courses, constant practice and self-evaluation using role play.

The elicited views on academic attainment as a dimension of quality education from a standard perspective revealed that participants related quality education to academic performance with predetermined scores, which promotes competition among both pupils and schools. Thus, the more first grades a school attains, the better the



performance is deemed to be. This suggests that teachers are likely to be inclined to teach with the aim of ensuring that learners pass exams with high scores without due consideration of the likely effects, especially after the schooling process has been completed. It is important to note that, as Sims (2017) puts it, the use of standardised scores to measure performance ignores learners' differences such as the learner's health, background, parents' level of education, age, language of origin, parents' poverty levels and so forth. This position was corroborated by the classroom observations where the entire teaching-learning process was guided by standard time allocations and predetermined content as per the national curriculum, operationalised by the schemes of work and lesson plans. The views pointed out by this study here agree with Popova et al.'s (2018) observation that the demand for increased access to quality education has precipitated a global policy shift focusing on standards measured by learners' tests and examination scores in the entire education system. The findings clearly reflect a growing adoption of neoliberalism, which has revolutionised the education sector with an overhaul of the curriculum that emphasises performance-related evaluations for both teachers and learners using standardised test scores. However, as Hutchings (2015) argues, the neoliberal wave and overconcentration on standardised scores has compelled teachers to focus on teaching for examination and tests. This implies that the overall score does not necessarily relate to learners' understanding but rather the idea that pupils are prepared and taught to pass the exams (DeSaxe, 2015; Hutchings, 2015; Pucci, 2015; Sims, 2017).

5.4 Goal achievement

Participants understood quality education as the ability of a school to achieve the set educational goals. Some of the views generated with the use of interviews revealed that the schools' sole goal is academic excellence. Individual teachers accordingly set their own goals which are aimed at achieving the overall school goals. Participants' views below confirm the goal achievement dimension as quality education from a standards perspective. First, Peace said:

“We have standardised goals to achieve every year. My target this year is to get at least 20 distinctions in Science. Once I realise that, I will be happy and I will be recognised and given a prize. But there are times you get a bad year. Some pupils are demoralising and you cannot be sure of a target”.



Further to the above, Adrine had the following:

“All my teachers set performance targets in terms of distinctions. As management, we encourage them and that is what brings us more pupils. We give back to the best performing teachers and this enhances competition”.

The above excerpts suggest that quality education was viewed from the perspective of target achievement, that is, the highest grades attained at the end of the primary education cycle. It is also indicated that goal achievement in the form of academic performance was affected by a number of factors such as pupils’ ability and eagerness to learn, the inducements that school managers use to reward teachers whose subjects get the best scores and the performance of other schools. Critical to the views in the quotes is the emphasis on performativity as a tool for addressing the competition in the market. This is a true reflection of neoliberal features in the Ugandan education sector. Thus, it can be deduced from the participant’ views that much as quality education in form of goal setting and realisation encourages teachers to work hard, it is also deemed to compel them to focus their teaching on only the likely areas to be examined and to neglect other critical quality education domains that facilitate holistic teaching and learning.

The practice of goal setting was apparent among urban schools though there was no difference on the basis of ownership. This can be attributed to the prevailing competition among urban schools, with each working hard to be highly ranked. In relating this to the global context, it can be urged that the practice of setting goals, as measured by scores reflects a clear manifestation of the global neoliberal reform agenda in the education sector that has brought about the use of standardised scores, something that Hutchings (2015) refers to as high stake testing, where test and examination results are used to judge the quality of schools.

On the front of addressing the issue of how teachers practised quality education in the classrooms with regard to goal achievement, the data generated revealed that teachers were using guided discovery in their daily classroom instruction to engage learners in thinking and coming up with alternative ways of responding to problems. In the excerpt



below, Eddie depicts the understanding and use of guided discovery in a manner that points a learner in a more creative direction.

“There are topics that require some guidance to make the child think. For example, I can task a child that a rectangular garden measures two meters by six meters and then I task him/her to calculate the total distance around that garden. The child will think and figure out what that round distance is all about. The pupil will think highly to establish that the distance around the rectangular garden is all about the perimeter. So the child thinks on his/her own and even ascertains the formulae and finally calculates the perimeter of the garden”.

Of a similar disposition, Juliet commented as follows, justifying the importance of guided discovery as a method of classroom instruction:

“We also don’t need to be spoon-feeding where by you are lecturing. So, we guide them (pupils) to discover on their own. It actually helps them so much. As a teacher you follow up to ensure that the child reaches the targeted level of understanding. For example, I can bring a picture of people plucking tea and task the pupils to discover and tell what the picture is all about and the economic importance of what they see in the picture”.

The views in the excerpts above suggest that guided discovery as a teaching method is capable of realising a number of tangible benefits for learners such as creating situations that trigger insights on a phenomenon by employing logical and creative approaches to problem solving. Effective use of this method helps learners understand that problems can have a number of practical approaches and solutions, but all within an accepted framework of application, with predetermined standards for which both learners and teachers are held accountable. The views also suggest that guided discovery is an attempt to allow learners to become involved in the teaching-learning process, as it deters the domination of teachers as learners are engaged in guided tasks that stimulate a high level of creativity and imagination. Teachers were using the method of guided discovery in different ways, which depicts the fact that the method can be used in different contexts depending on the topic, learners’ needs and levels of academic achievement.



For primary pupils, once effectively used, guided discovery can orient them to initiate a discourse on reinventing the wheel (Casad & Jawaharlal, 2012) with, through and by questioning other peoples' discoveries. Also, to effectively use the method, the teacher must have standards to guide and constrain the new options and ideas that learners come up with. By highlighting the positive effects of guided discovery on learners' ability to comprehend the subject matter and be able to come up with their own creative approaches of attending to tasks, the findings are in line with past research findings. For example, Bamiro (2015) found that the use of guided discovery, together with the think-pair-share method, enhanced learners' achievement in Chemistry. Those who were using the method obtained a higher mean score compared to their counterparts who were using the lecture method. Recent findings by Saleh (2018) on the effect of using the guided discovery method to enable students with intellectual disabilities to acquire some pre-academic mathematical concepts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia equally found that the performance of the experimental and control groups were significantly different in favour of the experimental group. The experimental learners enjoyed the interactive part of the method and were able to pick up new concepts and skills with ease.

Interview data revealed that to enhance the realisation of goals, schools have set up specific standards to ensure effective and enhanced performance on the part of both their teachers and pupils. The standards range from specific policies, laws and procedures to which staff members and learners are required to conform. In confirming the presence of school-specific laws, standards and procedures, Pius stated the following:

"... each school has its own by-laws. Not known by the ministry but some schools have their own bylaws. Like here, automatically when you are given a job; I am a government teacher that is why I was posted here last year. So when you reach here, they also tell you their by-laws and you must abide. For example, our morning classes start at 7.30 a.m. If you are a teacher and you cannot be in class by that time, you leave the job".

The excerpt above revealed that operating standards differ from one school to another, depending on the school's strategic direction, expertise, resources, performance history



and pupils ability to excel, much as they are all intended to ensure that schools excel. These standards are effected and operationalised without the knowledge of the Ministry of Education and Sports. However, they have to be in agreement with the national standards, especially with the final outcome of academic scores. The current practice of standards in the primary education sector in Uganda, as the findings indicate, is closely related to the end result of high grades at the end of the primary seven other than the process that is adopted by individual schools to realise the final scores. The presence of specific school policies was manifested in a number of ways across the different school categories. The elicited data in this regard were synthesised and presented under the following sub-themes: specific school policy and standards on academic performance and staff welfare.

Regarding academic performance, the study findings revealed that school have adopted a number of unique strategies which have been translated into operational policies for the purpose of improving pupils' academic performance. The following excerpts reflect the different initiatives specific schools have put in place to improve the quality of education offered by their respective schools. First, as Gad put it:

“We have our policies to achieve school goals, more especially remedial lessons. You know by government, we are supposed to begin classes at 8.30 a.m. and end at 4 p.m. but for us here we are beginning to teach at 7:30 a.m. Then in the evening, we also have an extra one hour – from 4 to 5 p.m.”

Related to the above, Alex added that

“... the school has also put on the ground a handwriting project. This one makes uniform handwriting to every child because legibly written work makes it easy for the person reading the work to come out even and interpret it qualitatively because if the work is not written well, it may not come out perfectly”.

Milton also explained a similar point in the excerpt that follows:



“Yes, for instance besides producing students just through the line of education, we find it very important for a child for instance to leave primary and go to a secondary school when he is able to make a speech in English. So, we have made English the official language at school. It is the mode of communication in the school”.

The views in the above excerpts reveal that in order to attain the national standards, schools have designed their own operational policies and standards aimed at ensuring that there is excellence in performance. Schools go the extra mile to ensure that all learners understand and master the concepts taught by giving them extra lessons. They also ensure that children can compete favourably with other schools by producing work that any other person or examiner can read and understand. These are good operational policy practices that can contribute to the overall academic performance of schools. These views also indicate that although these school-based strategies are initiated with the aim of improving performance, some of them contravene the national standards set by the Ministry of Education and Sports. For example, even though the Ministry of Education and Sports clearly spells out the starting time of classes as 8 a.m. and ending at 4 p.m., some schools were starting classes at 7 a.m. and ending at 5 p.m. The use of English as the official language at school equally contravenes the thematic curriculum of using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction up to primary four. Participants were aware that they were contravening the government policy on education, but had to work according to the dictates of their schools. This phenomenon was prominent among the private schools irrespective of their location. This can be attributed to the neoliberal feature of the need to eliminate collectivity and holding each school independently accountable for whatever actions that take place, measured by the overall results in the form of standardised scores.

In addition, the lessons taught beyond the normal teaching hours were revealed to be paid for in one of the private schools visited. Although this could be explained by the competition private schools face in the bid to create the impression that they are performing well and thus attract pupils, this policy disadvantages pupils whose parents may not be able to afford to pay for such lessons. This ends up creating two categories of learners in a similar class. The reason given for this feature was that those who are able to pay should not be denied the chance to excel in their primary leaving



examinations. Given the nature of this study's foundation, it can be noted that such a practice is an indication of the influence of the global neoliberal reforms in the education sector. With education being regarded as a product one can pay for, schools' main means of attracting more pupils is their ability to excel and pass in division one at the end of primary seven. Thus, such schools do everything they can to ensure that standards are attained throughout the entire teaching-learning process.

Another standard instituted by some schools was assessment of learners and categorising them into streams according to their academic abilities measured by standardised test and examination scores. Emmy succinctly explained the phenomenon as follows:

“Besides, we also grade learners and put them in streams according to their academic ability so that we can help them accordingly while teaching. Grading them according to their ability helps us to know slow learners or time takers in time so that they can be given extra time and remedials. We can give them extra time because their way of learning is not the same. So, the geniuses are put alone and do it quickly, then those who are time takers are given time. So even when the teacher is going there, you go when you are patient. You will know that these pupils take time. Just like we are different on faces, so is our understanding”.

The excerpts above suggest that some schools were working hard to offer the best they could to improve pupils' academic performance. Pupils are put into streams according to their learning abilities, judged by scores. The intention is to ensure that the teacher delivers a lesson in the most appropriate and simple manner that time takers can comprehend. On a negative note, the excerpt raises worries about teachers' predisposition towards a weak class, even before going there. This suggests that the content, approaches and exercises used in such classes differ from the best performing stream. Such a situation may not help the weak pupils in the end because they limited to the low performing category. Besides, children get to know that they belong to such a category, something that might cause them to lose heart. Furthermore, this school policy of streaming pupils according to their abilities equally contravenes the UPE policy. This phenomenon was witnessed only in private schools in both urban and rural



environments. This is partly explained by the high competition among urban schools and the need to eliminate all cases of low grades as much as possible so as to attract more pupils. It was also observed that this could have been due to the high number of pupils in private schools. Although the head teacher argued that this was due to the large numbers, I logically suggested that mixing strong and weak pupils would still constitute streams with similar numbers.

There is evidence that categorising pupils according to their academic abilities based on standardised scores may have dire consequences and worsen academic attainment. For example, research findings by Smyth & McCoy (2011) on improving secondary level education using policy development in Ireland, indicated that learners who are put in lower ability classes increasingly do worse whilst those put in higher ability classes do not make any significant gain due to the perceived feeling that they are already better compared to the lower ability category. Pupils put in the lower ability classes also reach a moment of despair and might start to believe that that is where they actually belong in the academic realm. Overall, this leads to a decrease in the overall average learner performance. The OECD (2013b) found that streaming learners according to performance had a negative impact on their educational aspirations in Mathematics. This was attributed to the stigma learners experienced with regard to their expectations of poor performance. This is commonly related to the child's understanding that he/she is weak and unless there is a unique attempt to strengthen such a child, recovery might not be easy.

In the case of staff welfare, it was noted that schools have put in place localised staff welfare policies. For example, in two of the schools visited, staff members had put in place a staff financial revolving groups aimed at helping staff meet their welfare needs, increase their stability of tenure and, therefore, raise their morale for teaching. They have standardised their monthly contributions and any delay in remitting contributions is fined. In explaining the usefulness of these groups, Grace who happened to have been a head teacher, put it this way:



“As staff, we have an association and at the end of every month, we have something like a nigina⁴ where we contribute money and then someone takes mainly to improve on staff welfare. We retain a balance that members can borrow. It makes members united and they are able to meet set standards and their development needs. Every teacher must be part of the group”.

Grace’s remarks suggest that some of the schools’ internal policies are helping teachers to feel a sense of belonging in their respective schools. Their ability to access resources in times of need is a great form of motivation, something that improves their dedication to their work and can contribute to the realisation of school goals. Moreover, in following up on the usefulness of these financial revolving groups with regard to standards, it was revealed that access to finances increases conformity to standards as the would-be barriers to compliance are addressed by the internally pooled resources. The use of these groups did not indicate any urban or rural trend but was mainly found in religious/church founded schools. This could be explained by the religious and moral values of trust, sharing and brotherhood cherished by churches as opposed to the government and privately founded schools.

In addition, to improve staff welfare and lessen the workload, schools have resorted to the use of parent-supported teachers outside the government framework to fill the manpower gaps and reduce the high teacher:pupil ratio. In all the government schools visited, there was evidence of both government-supported teachers on the payroll and those recruited at a school level, supported and paid for by parents. Table 5.4 shows the existence of parent-supported teachers.

⁴ This is Ugandan local terminology that means a financial revolving fund, commonly used at community and village levels to help members meet their financial needs and create resilience.



Table 5.4: The presence of parent-supported teachers

Primary Schools	Total number of teachers	Government-supported staff	Parent-supported teachers
Kent	11	7	4
Radox	85	Purely private	85
Merit	7	5	2
Reality	17	11	6
Glad	9	6	3
Kids Cross	11	Purely private	11

Apart from the two schools that were privately owned, which to a greater extent meet their financial obligations to staff, the rest of the schools had adopted the use of parent-supported teachers. This was aimed at reducing the teacher-pupil ratio and thus accord individual attention to learners and meet the required staffing and performance standards. However, the levels of engaging the parent-supported teachers varied from one school to another, depending on parents' ability to raise money through individual contributions. These variations were a source of discontent as teachers would compare their remuneration package with those of other schools. On the other hand, the presence of parent-supported teachers raises pertinent questions over the government's position on free primary education. With this phenomenon experienced in all the government schools, the results attest to the fact that UPE is not entirely free.

The data from the interviews further revealed that as a management strategy to achieve academic school goals, pre-entry interviews are conducted with all new entrants. This is aimed at ensuring that the best and most able pupils are admitted. In confirming how useful pre-entry exams are as far as facilitating the achievement of schools goals, especially academic achievement, Grace candidly explained as follows:

“The type of people we have can demoralise us – so much that even when you do your best, they will still fail. You feel touched and demoralised. But it is all about the pupils we admit. For us we are UPE and we admit every child that is brought to school. We do not give pre-entry interviews like the private schools. They will keep on defeating us”.



The views in the excerpt suggest that the type of pupil a teacher has in class can affect the way he/she will practise quality education and realise the set quality standards. There are fast learners and time takers. These categories help teachers determine the pace, as well as the time required to cover a topic. This can affect a classroom teacher in two ways: pupils comprehending with ease, and thus completing tasks very quickly and pupils taking more time to understand, thereby calling for more time, resources and different techniques to ensure that all pupils understand. The views in the excerpt equally suggest that there are pupils who are self-driven and eager to learn, and thus make it easy for the teacher to implement lessons in their classrooms. The findings depicted variations on the basis of school ownership. Private schools were setting pre-entry standard examinations, with admissions determined by pass marks, thus admitting only the most capable pupils. Government schools, on the other hand, due to the UPE policy directives, were enrolling all school-age children brought to the school. In this school category, there were no differences on the basis of location, as government schools, both urban and rural, must work within the UPE policy framework.

Pursuant to the views presented under this sub-theme, it can be argued that the schools' goals as well as those of teachers are set to ensure that schools remain on top in terms of meeting the national standards that define quality education. From the school goals, teachers develop their own teaching goals and the process is operationalised in the classrooms in a manner that enhances competition among schools, teachers and learners. This, as DeSaxe (2015) argues, is a clear indication of neoliberalism in schools. As such, individuality, competition and meritocracy are championed. With this phenomenon prevailing in the education sector, high stakes targets are set for the individual teacher depending on the subject taught and the learners' ability. To this effect, there are variations in the set standards to be achieved even within one school.

5.5 Summary of chapter five

In this chapter, views on the understanding of quality education as standards were presented. Quality education is viewed as academic achievement and standards, in terms of which a learner is judged not only on their classroom and academic performance but also on their ability to perform certain functions according to the expectations of society. Quality education is also taken to be the attainment of the best grades both in



tests and examinations. The government has come up with policies like the national assessment and grading criteria and the primary school national curriculum to guide the conduct of both teachers and pupils towards the realisation of the best grades. Finally, quality education is viewed as the achievement of the school goals. Accordingly, schools have come up with context-specific policies such as putting learners in streams according to their abilities, school-level resource mobilisation and teaching beyond the normal school hours.

However, amidst the government policies, no regulation or mechanism has been put in place to ensure that all schools adhere to the policies. Schools, especially the privately owned ones, operate as they wish, with the aim of getting the best grades. The entire teaching and learning process is directed towards the attainment of the best scores. With overreliance on standardised scores, which is a manifestation of neoliberalism, the holistic training of learners in schools no longer exists. This is currently a great threat to quality education as it encourages the training of graduates who lack skills for survival and national development. It also disadvantages talent development, creativity and innovativeness in individual pupils, qualities which are important for individual and ultimately national development.



CHAPTER SIX

QUALITY EDUCATION AS ACCOUNTABILITY

6.1 Introduction

In chapter five, I presented the findings on teachers' understanding of quality education with respect to standards. In this chapter, I present findings on the understanding of quality education with regard to accountability. The connection between this chapter and chapter five is that with this study's foundation in the neoliberal movement, standards are justified with results in which key players account for their actions and the resources expended to meet the set standards and targets. The chapter contains a triangulation of the data generated using interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. The chapter integrates the way in which participants viewed quality education as accountability, especially based on their understanding and existing policies, how they practised quality education in the classrooms and the reasons as to why teachers practised quality education in the ways they did. The views generated were synthesised, grouped and presented under the following sub-themes, namely: (i) financial accountability, (ii) improved school image, (iii) performance related pay, (iv) academic competition and (v) accountability systems.

6.2 Financial accountability

Firstly, the participants' views as elicited from the interviews revealed that quality education is achieved when school managers make use of the financial resources in a manner that is deemed effective and can generate results. This form of accountability was further revealed to be structural in nature and the commonly used form of accountability in all the schools visited. This form of accountability was manifested in the manner in which certain office bearers are holding others accountable in accordance with their hierarchical position, as well as access to, use and control of financial resources in the operations of the education sector. Some of the participants' views regarding the understanding of financial accountability as an indicator of quality education were captured in the quotes below. For example, Peter explained as follows:

"We are expected to make financial accountabilities, we make financial reports, quarterly and annually. We are also audited. We hold annual general meetings and parents come and look at how we use funds. Then we are being guided by



these internal auditors and external auditors and we display how we have used the money. It shows that you are on the right track to get quality education”.

Further, in explaining how financial accountability works, Gaston put it this way:

“For resources like UPE finances, we have got what we call physical accountability. When we are entrusted with those resources – funds and so forth, we have a work plan – annual work plans. And each term has got its own specific activities and at the end of the term or year, you account for what you have used those resources for. You must show results”.

The above excerpts suggest that participants are conscious of and understand the relevancy of financial accountability. They attach value to the effective use of resources, especially in the perspective of generating results. Moreover, the views in the quotes suggest that participants attach the value of effective utilisation of resources to the financial accountability function. The financial accountability function follows certain guidelines effected through the use of experts operating both internally and externally. The excerpts also suggest that the effective use of funds must follow a systematic and well-structured plan of action that should reflect planned and actual use of resources in a given timeframe. Depending on action plans, school managers are expected to prove the value of the finances expended through both tangible and intangible results. It is also vital to note that the views suggest that financial accountability is completed once the process of using funds and the final results have been reported to the relevant educational stakeholders through the relevant forum. This presupposes that quality education is a result of a transparent system in which actors’ actions must conform to the stated organisational goals. The views in the excerpts generally reflect good practice with regard to the effective use of funds in the education sector, especially when the resources are sufficient and meet all the needs of the school.

A review of the documents confirmed views from interviews regarding financial accountability. The document analysis revealed that financial accountability is mandatory and is provided for by the laws of the Republic of Uganda. For example, the accountability function emanates and is foregrounded in the national Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), which gives local government the duty to oversee the



performance of all government employees so as to provide the best services as well as the implementation of government projects. It was revealed that pursuant to the constitutional stipulations on accountability, the Local Government Act (The Republic of Uganda, 1997) was promulgated with the aim of operationalising the Constitution. Cap 243 of the Local Government Act (The Republic of Uganda, 1997) clearly provides for the devolution of education services (nursery, special needs education and technical education) to the districts. In effect, education sector operations are governed by the Uganda Education Act (The Republic of Uganda, 2008). The Act lays the basis for the governance of the primary and post-primary education subsectors by providing the structures and modalities for accountability such as the use of inspections, supervision and financial management of public funds.

Specifically, in regard to the primary school subsector, the document analysis revealed that the Uganda Education Act (The Republic of Uganda, 2008) empowers SMCs to assume a governing role at the individual school operational level. The SMCs are supposed to compile annual reports and share them with the education stakeholders. This has not only enhanced the school managers' accountability role, but also the SMCs' leadership role (Farrell, 2010). The thinking behind financial accountability is that a school that effectively and efficiently utilises financial resources, ideally stands a chance of improving school performance, the indicators of which encompass the quality of the education received by learners.

Still, in an attempt to further streamline the financial accountability function in primary schools, and standardise the operationalisation of UPE funds, the government came up with School Facilities Grant (SFG) for Primary Schools: Planning and Implementation Guidelines for District and Urban Councils (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018, p. 5 of annex five), with three objectives: (a) To increase accountability to communities and local people through the promotion of bottom-up planning and involving grassroots stakeholders in decision-making at the inception of the budget cycle (b) To enhance supervision and monitoring of education service delivery by local governments through increased local ownership and stewardship of resources and (c) To increase local governments' discretion in the use of central government transfers in line with their identified local needs and priorities.



Specifically, the guidelines spell out exactly how government funds for the primary education subsector must be spent, with 50% of the funds released to be spent on instructional materials, 30% on co-curricular activities, 15% on school management such as repairs and payment of utilities and 5% to be spent on school administration (MoES, 1998). Thus, any action that contravenes the specified standard allocations may attract a sanction, halting the release of more funds in the succeeding quarter. The data from the document analysis suggest that the government has done a good job of enhancing the financial accountability function in primary schools by clearly putting structures and identifying actors in place that should be accountable. It is also implied that if financial accountability is to work effectively, the MoES, together with the designated district and local leaders must constantly monitor the use of resources by different schools. This monitoring role should also aim at ensuring that resources are used for the purpose they are meant if schools are to improve on their performance, including academic quality.

Throughout the data collection exercise, I observed accountability sheets for UPE funds pinned up in head teachers' offices in all the government-aided schools. The sheets clearly indicated the amount released per quarter, when it was released, the amount withdrawn from the school account, the date it was withdrawn and what it was used for. Although this reflects good financial management practice, head teachers pointed out that the money released per pupil was insufficient. Head teachers argued that effective accountability in the presence of insufficient funds cannot help to improve the quality of education. All the head teachers in the visited government-aided schools raised their dissatisfaction over insufficient capacitation grants and highlighted that schools cannot operate using the money the government releases. The insufficiency of funds created an opportunity for school managers to defend their inability to excel and, therefore, worked as a negative form of accountability for the poorly performing schools, with an argument that the government has no moral obligation to hold schools accountable when they are not enabling schools to operate. James, the head teacher of Kent primary school used the local dialect to put across his state of mind: *“Torikubaasa kukama ente, okateekyereza ngu neija kukuha amate marungi kandi obwe otarigugiriisa kweiguta. Nooba nooyebeiha”*. This literally means that *“You cannot expect a cow to give you the best milk when you are not feeding it well. You will be insincere to yourself”*.



With regard to the quality of education, the release of funds from government based on the number of pupils per school has also provoked diverse reactions. On a somewhat positive note, the practice has compelled head teachers to institute effective financial accountability and performance related mechanisms that improve schools' general performance aimed at attracting more pupils, much as this has also redirected the teaching methodologies to target areas that can allow pupils get the best grades. Some school heads inflate the number of pupils especially at the beginning of the year to attract more funds. Apparently, there is no effective system in place to track the actual number of pupils in primary schools. Despite the fact that government inspectors could conduct head counts, they have also not been facilitated to do this. Thus, statistics are based on head teachers' submissions to the District Education Officers and, finally, to the MoES.

Notwithstanding the benefits associated with financial accountability, its emphasis in education institutions reflects the adoption of the neoliberal reform movement. This has led to the creation of an audit culture that emphasises the use of state management structures especially when public funds are spent to provide a service (Rizvi, 2017). This has resulted in tension and insecurity among school managers and teachers, who end up working only with the aim of satisfying the audit culture without due regard for the ideal teaching-learning environment (Hutchings, 2015). From the views on this sub-theme, it is clear that financial accountability in primary schools, amid insufficient resources from government, has created an operational environment in which schools come up with strategies that allow them to compete for a big share of the government pool. The most important strategy is to improve academic performance and attract more pupils.

6.3 Academic competition

In addition, participants related quality education from an accountability perspective to academic competition, pointing out that when a given school emerges top in a given locality, the implication is that it is a leader in the realisation of quality education. This way, quality education is synonymous with getting the best grades. It is critical to note that with the liberalisation of the Ugandan education sector, private education institutions have increasingly emerged, and all expect to attract a good number of pupils to help them break even and make a profit. This has precipitated aggressive marketing, concessions and offers to education seekers. The most effective marketing strategy that accounts for the schools' good performance is its ability to get large numbers of pupils



into division one. The label “good school”, has, thus, become synonymous with schools that produce pupils with four aggregates. All the participants interviewed expressed the desire to get all their pupils into division one, and in particular with four aggregates. This is obviously not an easy task. As schools are left to prove that they can perform, all means possible to achieve that objective, both formal and non-formal, are employed. The following excerpts show the extent to which competition has been a force in directing the performance of primary schools in Uganda, and particularly in Bushenyi district. Adrine explained the situation this way:

“And you find that people who are learnt will want to take their children to where things are okay, not the UPE schools. Well, in private schools, the expectations are very high because of competition. Sometimes as you want to meet the expectations of the school or proprietors of the school, somehow, somewhere, we affect some learners who are slow learners”.

James, in expressing the state of competition among schools put it thus:

“... the best performers, they are normally taken away from this school to other schools better than this. So we have the medium ones. Automatically the parents have the chance to take them. Parents transfer them to good schools. We train them and after they have become experts, they take them”.

The views in the excerpts above suggest that school managers envisage increased quality education from the ability of schools to attract and retain pupils in their schools. This implies that pupils transfer from one school to another because they regard the quality in the former school as wanting. As the excerpts show, competition is fierce and parents are free to take their children to whatever school they please. Hence, schools perceived to perform badly keep on losing pupils. Parents with money take their children to the best performing private schools, while the poor leave their children in the poorly performing government schools. The excerpts suggest a difference between the government aided schools and the private ones, with poor performance being associated with the former. With regard to the competitive environment, views in the excerpts indicate that government-aided schools are losing pupils to private schools. In the first excerpt, Adrine raises the pertinent issue of time takers who may be exited from schools being



disadvantaged, not because they are not able to learn but because of the pressure that is exerted on school managers to produce learners with good grades. In this situation, school managers, especially in the private schools are not inclined to spend time on time takers. This is an obvious manifestation of the neoliberalism reform agenda in which the current accountability measures work to the hinder the inclusion of learners with varying abilities. In effect, some schools refuse to admit such pupils as they are likely to lower the schools' attainment figures (Hutchings, 2015).

One of the leading newspapers in Uganda, *The Observer* (1 February 2018) reported that the competition among primary schools has been getting stiffer, with private schools leading the way. It was pointed out that schools want to have all pupils in grade one and that it is “more than reputation and bragging rights are at stake. Especially for private schools, it is about the bottom line, as they remain competitive and can charge a king's ransom for fees without risk of losing pupils”.

The findings suggest that to attract numbers and remain in business, a school must attain the best scores. This has become the ethos in the Ugandan education sector, as the legitimate objective for the existence of schools has become the generation of good scores so as to attract more pupils and increase the financial inflows. In doing so there is the likelihood that schools do all it takes, including cheating and coaching pupils to get four aggregates while they may not be meticulous in applying and generating new knowledge. An education that stops at memorising for the purposes of passing is wanting in terms of addressing the global development needs, where knowing must be accompanied with the ability to apply what is known.

Policy-wise, the competition in the Ugandan education sector has been precipitated and harnessed by the government's promulgation of liberalisation policies that have resulted in a tremendous increase in educational institutions since the early 1990s (MoES, 2018). Liberalisation has been witnessed at all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary). As the MoES (2011) indicates, 72% of primary schools are government-aided schools while the rest, (28%) are purely privately owned and funded. Still, even in the government-aided schools, parents privately finance 70% of the budget (Twebaze, 2015). Although the reason given for the liberalisation of the education sector has been attributed to government's failure to meet the cost of providing public education to the



citizens (UN Committee, 2014), with the government contribution to education not exceeding 3.2% of national gross domestic product (UNICEF, 2013), it is also a reflection of the global reforms in education.

In 2008, the Private Schools and Institutions Department was established to operationalise and guide the implementation of policy in private education institutions. This department is charged with overall coordination, regulation, policy formulation and guidance of all matters regarding the private schools and institutions (MoES, 2013, 2018). However, the provisions remain on paper while in practice the economic motive pre-empts the holistic education motive (Twebaze, 2015). The implication points to the concentration on parameters that keep the private education managers relevant, as determined by the market forces, mainly to show performance in the standardised scores, attract more pupils and increase on the profit margin. Given the higher enrolments in private schools compared to the government schools, this study argues that the government is pulling out of the education sector and leaving the role to private operators who can effectively enhance accountability through the profit generation objective.

In a bid to realise quality education in the academic realm, teachers employed the circus method of teaching. In explaining the circus method, Alex put the following across:

“... we also have circus method. In this method, you set work on different tables, say you put something to deal with mathematics one a table, another table you put something to do with science, like that. Then you put them in a group, they are moving like in a circus. Each group does the work, finishes and leaves the work there. And when they move, the teacher picks for marking. A group which has a problem with Mathematics will easily be identified because they won't finish. It is about time; how are you going to finish and how much time do you need? So, it is like that and they do it because it enhances competition and time management”.

The excerpt suggested that the method encourages each pupil to contribute and each group then takes turns in taking responsibility of whatever deliverable is generated. In essence, it is expected that group members will be able to easily identify a source of



error if there is one. Learners do not wish to be won by their colleagues and this encourages them to remain alert to avoid being blamed by the other group members for being the source of error. It is also implied in the excerpt that pupils' ability to complete the task can be easily evaluated, something that enhances an individual work ethic that is critical in all examinations that must be done within a standard timeframe. The views also suggest that the effective use of the circus method calls for skilled teachers who must plan in advance for the lesson. The classroom environment must also be accommodating with sufficient space to allow for free movement in the circus patterns.

On one of the classroom visits, a circus was observed differently. Ten pupils at a time were invited to the front and formed a circle. Each pupil was then given an animal name, with some pupils sharing. Whenever the name was mentioned (for example elephant), the owner would get up and leave the circle as quickly as they could and go back to his/her seat while depicting some mannerism of that particular animal. For pupils who were sharing the animal name, the first person to leave of the circle would be the winner. Those who could not recognise their adopted animal names would remain in the circle. This would continue until one person remained. This activity compelled pupils to remain alert, as well as being great fun. The fostering of academic competition was found to be more prevalent in the private schools than the government-aided schools, and had no rural or urban inclination. This reflects the enhanced desire by private school managers to improve pupils' academic performance and remain in business.

The current trend in academic competition and accountability has been precipitated by the audit culture. This is a feature on neoliberalism which has led to the emergence of global and national comparisons (Rizvi, 2017). It is these comparisons that apparently drive primary schools in Uganda to attach value to standardised grading systems and scores. Hutchings (2015) further highlights that the issue of competition among learners in the classroom has emerged in the education policies, especially as a tool for accountability in the effective realisation of the learning outcomes. This has resulted in pressure being placed on learners by encouraging them to compete with their counterparts both in class and in other schools and ultimately excel. In Bangladesh, for example, Hossain (2017) links this pressure to excel to neoliberalism and argues that it has resulted into an examination regime that has put both teachers and pupils under



pressure and contributed to increased cases of examination malpractice such as paper leakages, copying and teachers supporting pupils in examinations to excel. Conversely, for schools to navigate the accountability environment, and especially given the stiff competition among schools, a number of accountability systems have been put in place to regulate the conduct of stakeholders.

6.4 Compliance with accountability systems

Among the participants, there were revelations that quality education is a function of compliance with accountability systems. To this effect, therefore, schools have put in place certain accountability systems that guide the conduct of pupils and teachers in the day-to-day learning process. For example, some teachers pointed out that they are tasked to sign an attendance register on arrival and departure every day. Although this form of accountability does not affect academic excellence, teachers mentioned that it was a way of meeting the standards set by the school's context-specific accountability framework. On explaining this, Glory made the following remark:

“You know, my physical appearance here means a lot. Management believes that when I am around, I am working and forgets that I can sign the book, go to class and do my own things. But management will say quality is improving because there are no absenteeism and late coming”.

The excerpt suggests that school managers have instituted accountability mechanisms aimed at regulating human behaviour for the purpose of improving schools' overall performance. The view in the excerpt suggests that school managers value the effort put in by their employees, which can literarily enhance task accomplishment. However, the excerpt equally suggests that accountability systems will not guarantee quality education unless those who are duty bound by the system attach value to its requirements and execute their tasks in a way that is in harmony with the schools' plan. Interactions with the head teacher of that school revealed that the owners of the school had instituted a policy in terms of which staff members had to sign an attendance register on arrival and departure to ensure value for money and that they put in the effort expected in the execution of school tasks. The head teacher was, however, sceptical that this would make any tangible contribution towards improved school performance.



Policy-wise, the issue of accountability systems was revealed to be part of the broader UPE policy that stipulates the need to automatically promote pupils to reduce government expenditure on pupils who repeat classes, as well as to provide proof to the public that the majority of citizens are receiving basic education. Some of the participants pointed out that the automatic promotion policy is merely a form of accountability, showing the public that large numbers of children have been able to access basic education. However, all participants in the study were sceptical about the value of the policy. The following excerpts provide evidence to that effect. First, Patrick expressed his dissatisfaction with the automatic promotion as follows:

“Automatic promotions at times affect learners. In our classes we have slow learners and fast learners. We can’t expect them to perform at the same level. So we do advise for another year in that level. At times we call parents and advise the learner and the parent. We also consider the age of the learners. But we do it illegally. The government is clear that every child should be promoted to another class after a year”.

James equally had a similar view when he mentioned the following:

“Mhhhh, there is a policy of automatic promotion, it is a government policy. But if we see that that child is not doing well, for us we advise. So, it is upon the parent to see if that child can buy our advice. For us we advise but the policy says automatic promotion. Some take our advice and others do not”.

The views expressed in these excerpts emphasise that learners have different capabilities. There are those that require much more time to master concepts and those who do so quickly. The views suggest that the government policy on promoting children has rendered school managers powerless in making decisions regarding pupils’ academic progress from one class to another. Their role has become purely advisory and the outcome depends completely on the parents’ decision. Given the financial implications of repeating, few parents are likely to take the teacher’s advice to allow pupils to repeat. The excerpts also suggest that much as school managers are implementing the policy of automatic promotion that was introduced with an aim of enhancing primary-level completion rates, the policy has exacerbated the quality of education since those who



may not be ready to go to another class, especially in terms of comprehension, end up getting promoted. This has resulted in a pool of primary school graduates whose level of understanding is low. For teachers, the quality of education in that regard is a direct consequence of the government policy where the classroom teacher has no mandate to influence events. As indicated earlier under quality education as standards, none of the private schools visited was implementing the automatic promotion policy. The use of a standardised pass mark constitutes the basis for promoting a child from one class to another. However, government schools were implementing the policy even though participants were sceptical of any tangible benefits.

Within the accountability framework, teachers practised quality education in the classrooms using the cooperative learning method and explanation, questions and answers. Cooperative learning was explained as a form of teaching in which the teacher encourages every pupil to participate in the teaching-learning process by assigning them all a role. Peter had the following to say when asked about the methods used to teach pupils in the classroom:

“For cooperative learning, every student in class has a role to play. Even the tasks are distributed among members, so whatever learning is in class, all pupils are involved. Nobody can dodge, every aspect of learning is handled by every pupil in that class. Pupils account for whether they have been attentive or not. That one is what we call cooperative learning”.

As the excerpt reveals, the method encourages pupils to execute tasks that can help them prove their levels of understanding before the teachers. This is a form of accountability that instils a sense of interdependence when learning. It also promotes being attentive in class. For the teacher, the method works as a tool to ascertain pupils' levels of understanding, as every action by a pupil illustrates their comprehension and mastery of the subject under discussion. In one of the classroom observations, primary one pupils were placed in groups of five and given plastic letters of the alphabet. The teacher tasked them with making as many words as they could in one minute. Pupils were seen taking charge of the process to making words within the limited time given. This form of teaching encourages pupils to help each other and each group is accountable for the output generated. Irrespective of the benefits associated with the



method, it was realised that it required standardised resources that most schools could not afford.

Closely related to cooperative learning is child-to-child learning which is used with pupils at different levels. In this form of teaching pupils from higher classes are called on to demonstrate a certain concept or activity. This works as a form of accountability to not only prove knowledge and awareness before the younger children but also to encourage the older children to assume the role of the teacher for a time. Peter explained the use of cooperative learning as indicated in the excerpt below:

“The old ones help the young new ones. Like even those ones in primary six go down to primary one and two. They help in matters of technical subject areas and social interactions. They are the ones who teach them toilet habits, how to take care of the environment, how to keep their items, and hygiene issues. For us here, every new pupil is allocated to another child for grooming and the trainers must give accountability on the progress of the young ones. So that is what we call child-to-child learning”.

It is evident from the excerpt that inter-class cooperative learning helps orient pupils in the lower classes to the school culture, rules and procedures. The method transcends pupil accountability in the form of academic scores to the social values that support the attainment of higher academic performance. The method is embedded in all aspects of school life as it addresses areas of social interaction and the wellbeing of the younger children. The method provides an accountability matrix in terms of which the older pupils have to prove their worth, while at the same time setting a precedent for the young ones to learn from and to replicate in future. The older pupils have to equally make reports to authorities regarding their progress in this grooming role. The method was observed to be working well in urban schools that had a boarding section irrespective of the founding organisation. This can be explained by the fact that pupils in boarding schools are compelled learn a lot with regard to socialisation from counterparts outside the classroom environment compared to their counterparts who get to go home immediately after school.



Across all the schools visited, teachers were using explanation and questions and answers in the teaching-learning process. The questions and answers were used as a tool for accountability with regard to confirming the extent to which learners master the subject matter. This form of accountability constituted the foundation for realising the final grades at the end of the primary education cycle. The participants revealed that effective teaching begins with explaining to concepts and their application to learners. Depending on the subject matter, this can be followed by an illustration. In the accountability function, learners should be given questions, either verbally or inform of an exercise upon which their answers can be used to confirm whether learning has taken place or not. This was regarded as a foundation for accounting for learners' presence in the classroom as well as their ability to learn.

The findings show that teachers used a number of training methods to deliver lessons within an accountability framework. The findings also suggest that the methods selected should be well suited to the subject, the nature of the topic and the learners' level. It was deduced from the findings that all the methods used were participatory in nature and could, therefore, help learners acquire skills and learn better as they interact and share with their peers, each taking responsibility of his/her own actions. In selecting and using the best method, however, the teacher remained critical. Thus, the teacher's understanding of the subject matter and use of the method will greatly affect the quality of education that results. Given the nature of most of the methods, they require enough time to realise results. However, due to the national framework, especially the standard school calendar, some teachers may not exploit some of these participatory methods as their focus is on completing the syllabus in the shortest time possible.

There were variations in the context-specific accountability mechanisms observed. Private schools have instituted routine accountability mechanisms such as performance appraisals, contract-based terms of engagement and the signing of attendance registers. These did not exist in the government-aided schools, however. This may have been due to enhanced efforts by private school managers to ensure that there is value attached to whatever effort is paid for. On the other hand, it equally reflects on the government's failure to effectively supervise and monitor school operations. This confirms Makaanu et al.'s (2015) observation that while the structures for accountability exist their functionality at the district, county and schools levels is a work in progress.



In all, the growing need for accountability systems has been precipitated by the growing need globally and public demand for improved learner performance in national examinations (Eacott & Norris, 2014; Maricle, 2014). Accountability systems and structures have been emphasised by the World Bank (2008) as a means of improving service delivery mechanisms (OECD, 2011). Institutions that fail to put accountability systems in place are prone to unjust action, uncontrolled circumstances and irregularities (Argon, 2015).

6.5 Performance-related rewards

Participants equally related quality education as accountability to performance-related rewards. This was linked to the fact that quality education is a function of performance targets and the inducements provided to stimulate hard work. There was an agreement in the elicited responses that when teachers are motivated, they in turn give their best. Adrine expounded on this as follows:

“Quality education is all about motivation – the way teachers are motivated. Because for any extra hour here, teachers are paid. So you find it hard for a teacher to dodge early bird, evening prep, come late or dodge on a Saturday. When the primary seven results come back, the owners of the school appreciate too much. They bring gifts. Whoever gets a distinction one in the subject taught takes a gift. So the competition is high among the primary seven teachers because the more you perform, the more money you will get. So it has motivated them. The school gives a two years bursary to the best pupil every year. Because for the time I have been here, there are many teachers who started this school in 2007 and are still around. And what makes them stay are the benefits they are getting from the school. Otherwise, most of them would have left”.

This excerpt suggests that schools are working hard to institute mechanisms that encourage teachers to work hard and produce good grades to be able to merit the support of the different publics. First, there is a monetary reward attached to the extra hours a teacher teaches, that is, if teachers teach beyond the normal working hours. It is also suggested that teachers and pupils who excel should be given financial or material



rewards. Such rewards would not only enhance performance among teachers but also pupils. For example, offering the best performing student in primary seven a bursary shows an effort of the part of the school to give back to parents. This equally encourages parents to offer the best support to their children, in the hope of meriting a bursary. It also directly enhances the school's visibility and relationship with the public, which helps schools attract more pupils. Important to note in the excerpt is that the issue of performance-related rewards increases teachers' retention rates. Their expectations to win in future becomes a factor that compels them to remain at a school. On the down side, however, the excerpt points out is that this practice only rewards primary seven teachers. Consequently, it should be structured in a way that teachers who teach the subject from primary one to primary seven for a given intake should be apportioned some of the rewards.

The practice of performance-related rewards was only witnessed in private schools irrespective of their rural or urban dimension. This can be explained by the fact that private schools have their own independent financial mobilisation and management systems that can allow for reward planning. Government schools on the other hand depend on the financial resources from government, which are characterised by cyclical insufficiencies and standardised allocations to operational activities.

The influence of teacher motivation on learners' academic achievement has been extensively researched. Gokce (2010) observed that teachers attach importance to needs that are deemed to increase their performance during the teaching-learning process. Satisfying these needs improves their level of motivation in teaching. Gokce (2010) also references earlier findings by Atkinson (2000) and Glynn, Aultman & Owens, (2005) that in addition to their professional competences, teacher motivation contributes greatly towards learners' academic achievement. Adeyemo, Asabi & Adedotun (2013) highlight that teachers' conditions of service, payment and promotion have a direct influence on learners' performance in mathematics. Suppovitz (2015) also argues that there should be sanctions including rewards and punishments to hold individuals more accountable if they are to produce the best results. However, the findings of this study suggest that the economic motive may supersede the inherent teachers' practices in the generation of quality education. When the market forces come into play, the actors, in this regard especially the teachers, are likely to concentrate on areas that help a child



memorise and pass with good grades. This implies that in the neoliberal discourse, accountability in the form of attaining the best scores is likely to compromise issues of understanding, application, analysing, evaluating and creating new knowledge.

6.6 Improved school image

From an accountability perspective, some of the views generated from the interviews revealed an understanding of quality education from the lens of improved school image. There were revelations that when a school is performing well, its image improves and this translates to a number of benefits such as staff retention, satisfaction and increased public trust. Within an accountability framework, participants linked improved school image to a form of physical and perceived accountability that is a true manifestation of how the school has been able to utilise resources and exploit the available chances to gain prominence and, therefore, meet societal expectations. Still, the overriding proof and precursor to improved school image rests in the school's ability to prove its efficiency function and the realisation of the best academic grades. Eunice's idea in the excerpt below gives insights into the appreciation of good education and the nature of accountability function especially as a current concern for education in the neoliberal discourse.

“We aim at creating a good image to the public. A school with a bad image is overlooked. If the school standards are poor, you cannot get a good name. Schools without a good image, you can fail to tell people that you work with the school. But if your school is performing nicely, the communities will say this school performs better and give you their children”.

The views in the excerpt portray the fact that school managers are concerned about their relationships with the communities and the public at large. Using an accountability framework, schools have put in place strategies to ensure that the school image is improved and maintained. It is suggested in the excerpt that the school image must be enhanced by performance which can cover a range of aspects. For example, excelling in co-curricular activities, discipline of both pupils and staff, improvement in the acquisition of infrastructure, the academic level and other factors that can enhance the image of the school. Thus, the excerpt suggests that quality education as accountability



is not only a concern for academic performance but also how the school positions itself to serve the interests of the society holistically and gain public trust and confidence. Finally, the excerpt suggests that efforts made in improving the image of a school target certain benefits such as enhanced staff identity and attracting potential new education clients. These findings depict Kogan's (1986) form of public accountability in which individual and institutional actions target certain outcomes. This presupposes the existence of two or more parties interacting and supporting the existence of the other, hence interdependency in operations. In the context of the findings above, the reward for good performance is positive social recognition and the associated benefits. Likewise, poor performance attracts a sanction in terms of which the school image is lowered, leading to decreasing pupil enrolments. It was further revealed that schools constantly strive to improve their image to the parents by issuing progress reports in the form of report cards every term, and sharing pupils' general performance in meetings with parents. For teachers, such practices constitute a form of accountability in which schools take stock of pupils' performance and report to parents.

A review of the documents revealed that the *Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators for Education Institutions* (The Republic of Uganda, 2010) is a policy that articulates what the various stakeholders of education should put in place to support the generation of quality education. The policy hinges on the need to fulfil the MoES vision of "provision of quality and appropriate education and sports services for all", provision of a guiding framework for education institutions in a manner that can harness the teaching-learning environment and foster the elimination of constraints to the realisation of quality education in Uganda. The policy equally paves the way for stewardship in the licensing and operationalising of education institutions in Uganda. Adherence to the policy is operationalised by this policy, which provides guidelines for the establishment, licensing, registration and classification of private schools and institutions. These guidelines (MoES, 2013) were designed to empower education stakeholders to implement laws on how education institutions should operate. This is done by laying down the acceptable procedures and standards deemed to enhance the realisation of academic achievement by all education services providers. The guidelines form a framework upon which conformity or lack of conformity to the procedures is ascertained. Education providers are, therefore, held accountable based on the standardised operating procedures listed in the education sector guidelines.



The existing policies presuppose that adherence to the required standards would ideally streamline and improve the teaching-learning environment. Locally, this would also help improve the schools' image. Participants were aware of the existence of the policy on Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators for Education Institutions (The Republic of Uganda, 2010). For example, they constantly mentioned insufficient instructional materials, latrines, teachers' houses and so forth, thus indicating their awareness of the standards that the policy stipulates. This policy cuts across all schools, irrespective of their location or ownership. In this regard, participants were aware of their roles and responsibilities as education managers. The policy provides a broader framework for understanding what is required of each stakeholder as well as the education targets. If these requirements were strictly adhered to, there would not be cases of schools with insufficient structures or lacking in the other resources required. This would imply that all schools would be able to operate without deficiencies, and thus, would be on the right path to generate quality education. The findings also suggest that the government is doing a good job in ensuring that private owners meet the standard requirements for setting up schools. This is aimed at ensuring that the lives of learners are not jeopardised and also to ensure a uniform application of certain minimum standards. The policy guides the operations of privately founded and owned schools in a manner that positions them in an institutional framework for the generation of quality education.

It emerged strongly from the data that schools have come up with a resource mobilisation strategy aimed at raising funds to cater for their recurring needs. Across all the schools visited, it was found out that management had come up with unique fee structures, irrespective of the UPE funds released to schools, although there are major differences depending on the location. It was revealed that Under the Parent-Teacher Association, parents are primarily expected to participate in the management of primary schools including raising funds. Due to insufficiency of government's capacitation grant, each parent is requested to contribute some amount, commonly used to pay improve on the pupils and staff welfare needs especially lunch, infrastructure, teachers' salaries and on interventions to improve the teaching learning environment. The findings generally revealed that there were still gaps as far the welfare of staff and pupils was concerned.



The prevailing gaps were used as a form of negative accountability, in which teachers felt they should not be held accountable for poor performance since the system and school management had failed to address their welfare needs. To this effect and with respect to lunch, schools had to mobilise resources so as to provide lunch for pupils and staff members. This was common in government-aided schools both in the rural and urban settings. The problem related to pupil and staff meals is acknowledged by Adrine in the excerpt below:

“Still the welfare of children differs. In government schools, they do not cater for them. They are not given things like lunch. You find children stay the whole day without food at school and it affects their performance. Of course when you are teaching the hungry ones they cannot take in things. When you come to the private schools, all these things are catered for. So you find that those are challenges that have put Uganda backwards. And you find that people who are learned will want to take their children to where things are ok. When you look at the nature of parents who are here; they do not have money, but these are people who value education, who have compared the government and private schools and confirmed that this school is one of the best schools in Bushenyi”.

The excerpt highlights the fact that there were significant variations regarding the provision of staff and pupil meals on the basis of ownership. The excerpt depicts that the situation was under control in private schools in contrast to the government-aided schools. With regard to accountability, teachers in the private schools felt they had a responsibility to work hard and produce the best results as a form of paying back for the welfare services they were accessing. The excerpt also depicts that fact that parents have a choice in determining where to put their children. This choice is determined by the availability of resources, making well-resourced schools the ones that have a choice about whom to admit. Of course failure to provide meals for staff and pupils, which is an anti-public welfare form of the capitalist society, constrains pupils' and teachers' efforts to concentrate. It was also noticed that at lunch time, some pupils preferred to go home for lunch and come back to school afterwards. I observed pupils getting back to school at 3 p.m., an hour after classes had resumed. In this case, teachers did not seem



bothered, but seemed to be inured to the problem. In such circumstances, quality of education would be compromised by lack of welfare of staff and pupils at large.

Concerning the infrastructure, schools were raising funds to build teachers' houses, changing rooms for girls and latrine facilities. The participants were not happy about government's failure to provide them with houses. Grace's response in the excerpt below provides evidence of this.

"We lack accommodation, for example, we are six teachers and there are two houses. Is that enough? ... So we are demoralised. When you add there the environment we are working in, aahhaa, quality education is not here".

Eunice gave more insights on the state of welfare facilities especially teachers' houses. She argued thus:

"They should help in constructing some other buildings. Yes, like classroom blocks, toilets, staff quarters. We have but they are not good. They are not good. They are like mizigos.⁵ We are still smearing them with cow dung. Conditions are hard but there is nothing we can do and with such conditions, teachers also cannot do well. They can't wake up early, may be to do remedials".

The above excerpts depicts a state of need. It is implied in the extracts that lack of staff houses demoralises teachers and affect their teaching and they thus use it as an excuse for not performing well. There is often a lot of time unaccounted for as teachers walk long distances to schools. Indirectly, this means that management cannot insist on quality work when the prerequisites for such good performance are non-existent. This is also a form of negative accountability as teachers feel less inclined to devote a great deal of effort in the teaching-learning process. Lack of staff housing was found to be a problem at all schools irrespective of category. However, teachers in private schools

⁵ Mizigos is slang that literally means poor one-roomed houses commonly found in slum areas for the urban poor.



were better placed as they were getting relatively higher salaries than their colleagues in government-aided schools. They could, therefore, afford to rent decent houses close to their respective schools. None of the schools visited had a changing room for girls. There were, however, some schools that had deficient latrines, well segregated with respect to gender. It was highlighted during one of the interviews with a head teacher that girls tend to miss classes during their menstrual periods as they fear being seen by boys when they are changing sanitary towels. This was mainly the case in rural schools where the few latrines did not have doors. Therefore, it was common for girls to miss classes, tests and examinations. The study realised that in such cases, quality education cannot be guaranteed.

The case of staff salaries was also a significant issue and schools were mobilising resources to address it. High levels of dissatisfaction were expressed with the salaries teachers were getting. Peter's views in the excerpts below depict the magnitude:

“Salaries are not enough. And these days when you look at payments or the emoluments for teachers, you find someone is getting 400,000 Ugandan shillings and has a child who wishes to be at the university and the two do not harmonise. What he gets, cannot help him pay fees for the child at the university”.

Grace also raised a point regarding the remuneration of teachers. She mentioned the following:

“Even the pay. Teachers are earning around 400,000 Ugandan shillings amidst a lot of deductions and you end up with nothing. And even the methods they are using to pay us; this system is not good because almost every month you find your money cut, you do not find your salary there. Like me last month, I was not paid. I am still bargaining with them, they are telling me wait, wait, wait, wait until when?”.

And Juliet succinctly linked teachers' salaries to quality education in the following words:



“Poor salary equals poor quality of education. Nobody should expect wonderful results where he/she has not invested”.

The excerpts above suggest that teachers are unable to meet their recurring needs due to low salaries. These participants voice their bitterness towards the government for its failure to address the issue of wages for teachers and the unexplained deductions in form of taxes. There were also anomalies in effecting payments as some teachers would not have their salaries wired to their respective bank accounts. This form of double jeopardy would make the already vulnerable teachers suffer the more. These views also suggest that when teachers are well paid, they in return become more motivated and endeavour to teach well and generate quality education. Juliet’s response also implies that good performance in a school can only be maintained if an equivalent investment has been made in the teaching-learning process. With regard to accountability in education, the excerpts depict the fact that both parties, that is, the government and teachers, have a role that must be executed to the full if learners are to benefit. Thus, the government’s failure to pay teachers a salary that takes into consideration the cost of living gives teachers’ the grounds to argue that they are not duty-bound to meet the expectations since they are not well facilitated.

With respect to addressing the challenge of staff salaries, it clearly emerged that the money government-aided schools raise from parents is only used for paying teachers who are not on the government payroll but have been recruited directly by parents to fill the staffing gaps. The contribution varies from one school to another. Differences were also found in the degree of effort made by teachers on the government payroll and those that were not. The phenomenon of poor remuneration was characteristic of government-aided schools irrespective of their location. Their counterparts in private schools had standardised salary structures based on qualifications and their length of tenure at the school. This generally explains why the participants in private schools highlighted the need to increase salaries for teachers at government schools. Adrine, a head teacher of a private school, had this to say:

“Then there is need to increase salaries of teachers in government schools. Most of the teachers have run away from government schools to join private



schools because the payment in private schools is fair. Because if a teacher here is getting one million Ugandan shillings, then a neighbouring school is a government and they are getting 400,000 Ugandan shillings, that is why now, good teachers have taken off from government schools”.

This excerpt illustrates the fact that the government has not tried to improve teachers' remuneration packages, something that affects their morale and thus negatively affects their teaching. The excerpt also highlights that government schools are constantly at risk of losing teachers who they opt to join private schools where they are relatively well paid. This situation clearly articulates the state of education operating as a marketplace in a free competitive environment. Those who can afford to meet the costs are able to access the best products and services on the market. I envisage the possibility of government-aided schools closing down completely as more private schools emerge able to offer better remuneration packages to teachers. This will also mean that parents will move their children to private schools where learning conditions are far better than those in the government-aided schools.

To sum it up, it is evident from the findings that the welfare of teachers and pupils has not been given attention and this portrays flaws within the accountability function. When one of the parties fails to account for its actions, the other parties are negatively affected. This study reveals that accountability is not only based on providing results but also the reasons for the failure to provide the expected results. Participants were aware of what they were entitled to but could not access. Teachers feel hopeless because of the poor working conditions. They spend a lot of time commuting to school from great distances. In all, the findings suggest that the poor socioeconomic conditions of staff and pupils may constrain effective teaching and, therefore, compromise the quality of education. The findings here attest to the link between teachers' welfare and learners' academic achievement, which has been widely researched and documented. For example, Jusuf (2005), in a study aimed at improving teacher quality, a keyword for improving education facing global challenges, observed that if educational institutions are to attract, motivate and retain teachers, their welfare must be reasonably addressed. Jana, Khan, and Chatterjee (2015) found that low teachers' salaries were among the critical factors that affected the quality of primary education in areas of Jhargram sub-division, India. Highlighting the need for improved teacher welfare, Johnson et al.



(2012) argue that manipulative factors such as class size, pay and job security not only improve teachers' welfare but also improve the working relationships between teachers and their education managers.

Finally, schools raised funds to improve the teaching-learning environment. Participants held that the internal environment significantly affected the way a teacher teaches in the classroom. This was mainly related to the teacher: pupil ratio that was envisaged as constraining the teaching-learning process. In terms of the accountability function, participants felt that overcrowded classes constrained effective teaching and learning and gave them as a reason for not performing in line with the desired standards. This phenomenon is prevalent in government-aided schools and was raised by a participant from a privately owned school. Alex put it this way:

"... and when you go to those schools and you go to ask, you will find the staff ceiling, the number of teacher: pupil ratio is very high compared to ours here, where you are given only 40–45 and a teacher is meant to handle only 45 or less. And in this, a teacher is able to know who has not done corrections, will know who has not written well".

Accordingly, Alex suggests that teachers cannot teach classes with high number of pupils effectively, owing to inability to give individual attention. Smaller classes, on the other hand, provide teachers with an opportunity to monitor the learning process closely, mark exercises easily and generally create personal rapport with learners. This calls for more manageable class sizes for effective teaching. The excerpt also seem to suggest that bigger class sizes are a characteristic of government-aided schools.

However, this situation was only evident in one government school that had a total enrolment of 985 and 17 teachers, giving a teacher: pupil ration of 1:58. It was realised that the UPE programme was no longer a factor behind increased enrolments in the rest of the government-aided primary schools in Bushenyi district. Instead, financially able parents had resorted to taking their children to private schools where there they are guaranteed a conducive teaching-learning environment. Other than considering the absolute teacher: pupil ratios, the participants involved in the study echoed the need for more teachers, with an aim of reducing on the teacher workload and according learners



individual attention. Thus, the findings portrayed the fact that a conducive environment that merits the support of community members, especially parents, and the supporting internal mechanisms such as reduced workload can stimulate teachers' interest and raise their morale to teach. Once their devotion and interest in teaching increase, the quality of education is also likely to improve. Accordingly, the findings portrayed the fact that a conducive environment with a manageable workload can stimulate teachers' insights and raise their morale to teach. Research findings by scholars such as Ladd (2009) and Nakpodia (2011) agree in principle that a better work environment improves learner achievement. Nakpodia (2011) illustrates that a deficient work environment forces teachers to resort to alternative means of survival, thereby reducing the attention given to effective teaching. This certainly leads to low pupil achievement.

The issue of improving the school image in the accountability framework is a calculated strategy for convincing the public that schools can offer the best services. The overriding intention is that schools aim at emerging the best both in terms of social recognition and academic performance. With such achieved, schools will be in business; the pupil numbers will increase and so will the profits. This is a characteristic of the neoliberalism reform agenda in education where the more advantaged and financially able parents have resorted to taking their children to private schools in a conviction that private schools offer better education due to their ability to provide a conducive teaching-learning environment and adequate and relevant instructional materials, as well as offering the best management policies and practices (Nusche et al., 2012).

6.7 Summary of chapter six

This chapter presented insights into teachers' understanding of quality education as accountability. The chapter provides evidence that the current school operations in Bushenyi district are run purely within an accountability framework, supported by government reform policies, together with school-based strategies such as financial accountability, academic competition, performance-related rewards, use of school-based accountability systems and efforts to improve the image of schools. These factors are aimed at controlling the actions of players for the purposes of effectively and efficiently utilising resources to meet targets and the expectations of the education stakeholders and the public at large.



The study findings revealed that academic competition is prevalent especially in the private schools where the desire to improve the school image necessitated the obtaining the best grades in examinations. Schools have shifted attention from the traditional holistic education to score-based education where schools are operating as factories, producing examination scores.

On the other hand, financial accountability was strongly emphasised in government-aided schools as the government emphasises how the school facilities grant and capacitation grant must be spent. With regard to practice, teachers employed methods such as the circus method, cooperative learning and child-to-child learning. These methods are used with an aim of assessing how children have learnt and how they can explain to fellow learners.

Another method of accountability witnessed among the government schools was automatic promotion from one class to another. This is based on the argument that it confirms increased access to education as more citizens complete the primary school level and reduces the costs that government incur when pupils repeat classes. The trend points to the creation of league table of schools that will dominate the market for education and finally accumulate profits.



CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONTRIBUTION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In the previous three chapters, the findings of the study were presented with regard to the understanding of quality education (quality education as national development, quality education as standards and quality education as accountability), how teachers practised quality education in the classrooms and why they practised quality education in the ways they did. The findings were also discussed by cross referencing them to the existing literature. In this chapter, the findings are summarised with a reflection on the purpose of the study, the literature that constituted the foundation of the study, the conceptual framework and the participants' views. Emerging from the findings, the study's contribution to the academic world is presented. Finally, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research are also provided.

7.2 Summary

This summary discusses the aim of the study, the methodology that was used to generate the data and finally the main findings, presented in terms of the three themes that guided the study, namely, quality education as national development, quality education as standards and quality education as accountability.

7.2.1 Purpose of the study

The study aimed at finding out how teachers' understanding and classroom practices affect the quality of primary education in Uganda. The study was guided by the main research question: How do teachers understand and practise quality education in Ugandan primary education? This was divided into three specific research questions, namely:

- How do teachers perceive policies related to quality education?
- How do teachers practise quality education in classrooms?
- Why according to teachers do they practise quality education in the ways they do?

The study purpose was supported by the gaps identified in the literature where, in the attempt to define and implement education quality interventions in the classroom, both the policy and the practical understanding of quality education neglect teachers'



understanding and classroom practices. The study was premised on the assumption that what teachers understand to be true will always influence their classroom practices, for example teaching methods, content and assessment methods. Their understanding, therefore, will affect the quality of education that pupils receive in the classroom as well as how they will use the acquired knowledge and skills in future.

7.2.2 Methodology

The nature of the research questions above (as in 7.2.1) could be best investigated using the ontological philosophy, which postulates that reality is subjective and socially constructed by participants. As such, the study was further guided by an interpretivist paradigm and employed qualitative approaches in the generation, analysis and interpretation of data. Owing to the nature of the research questions, which required answers to the why and how questions, the study employed a case study research design. A total of 30 participants (six head teachers and twenty-four classroom teachers) were involved in the study. Data were generated from 18 classroom teachers and six head teachers through the use of interviews, which were conducted using an interview guide. Six classroom observations were also conducted, one in each of the six schools visited, using an observational check list. An analysis of the existing documents on the quality of primary education in Uganda was done using of a document review checklist. The document analysis focused on both the existing national policy on quality education and school-specific strategic and operational documents that articulate and operationalise the generation of quality education in primary schools. The data collected from the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Themes were developed and subsequently coded. ATLAS.ti was used to analyse the data. Data interpretations were made using content analysis, after integrating interview data with the observations and the document analysis data.

7.3 Main findings as per study themes

The findings were summarised according to the major themes that guided their presentation and with respect to the study's main themes in the literature review, namely, quality education as national development, quality education as standards and quality education as accountability. In presenting the data, these themes were each filtered by how teachers understand quality education, how they practise quality education in the classrooms and the reasons as to why teachers practise quality



education the way they do. Presenting data in this way helped answer the three specific research questions that the study set out to provide answers to.

7.3.1 Teachers' understanding of quality education as national development

The study findings revealed that participants understood quality education with respect to national development in various ways. Quality education was perceived as holistic training with the aim of training a child in all the domains of life, good service offered to children in the hope that they would in future provide similar services, planning for the child's future to be a responsible citizen, tolerance of others, especially given the dynamic nature and differences among people who study and work together, empowerment and equipping the child with competitive skills. The understanding of quality education as national development, as the study findings indicate, covers the reason as to why nations invest in education through their planning processes, what happens in the classroom during the entire learning process and what the products of the education system are able to do after schooling to contribute towards national development. This way, the products of education should be empowered to utilise the knowledge and skills acquired to stimulate and contribute towards national development. However, this can only work when the constraints to the utilisation of the acquired skills are eliminated. The study findings also revealed that current understanding is influenced by the global neoliberal reform agenda in the education sector. In current practice, the transition from collectivism to individualism as a feature of neoliberalism has tended to result in increased social and economic inequalities rather than enhanced economic growth. And with the provision of education left to the private education institutions, access to quality education has become a reality for only those who can afford meeting the cost of education. This has in turn influenced the national planning process as well as the policies that direct the education sector, with the few who control the education sector taking the lead in formulating policies that are aimed at reducing inefficiencies and maximising profits. Accordingly, learners are taught targeting performing over a certain job in the global competitive markets in a manner that conforms to specific standards and compliance with the rules and regulations set forth by the employing agency.

Concerning how teachers practised quality education in the classrooms with regard to national development, the findings revealed that teachers used a number of training



methods such as demonstration, critical thinking and experimentation. The use of these methods was influenced by national policies as well as the schools' context-specific policies which aim at promoting the prerequisites for national development by inculcating development-oriented values into learners. The teacher plans these methods in a way that positions the learner to be able to envision the ideal future, what it requires and how to get to the desired state. In practice, this means shaping a child's mind set towards a desired future. Methods such as critical thinking and school-based policies such as the school farm initiatives and on-the-job teacher skills enhancement programmes have been designed to ensure that teachers constantly hone their skills and understanding in the global development agenda and, therefore, offer the best and most relevant skills to learners.

It was also revealed by the findings that teachers practised quality education the way they did with regard to national development due to the presence of national policies that articulate the national development vision and strategies. These policies have been influenced by the global neoliberal reform agenda in education that fosters individualism as opposed to collectivism. These is a growing tradition in which global capital, in its current neoliberal form in particular, leads to human degradation and inhumanity, injustice and increased social class inequalities within nations and on a global scale. Participants revealed that they were duty bound to work within the requirements of the national policies on quality education especially those with an inclination to national development. These policies included the education policy review commissions and UPE.

The study findings equally revealed that in addition to adhering to national policies that articulate the need to train children for the purposes of stimulating national development, schools have developed and adopted their own specific policies that streamline operations. For example, policies on mentorship and inculcating survival skills, education for sustainable development and teachers' skills enhancement programmes, as well as the school culture and history (which set the schools' agenda for operations) and the schools' strategic and development plans, were all aimed at ensuring that individual schools direct their efforts towards the realisation of school-specific development needs, thereby contributing to national development. Despite participants' wider understanding of quality education in the perspective of national development,



their practice is constrained by the existing national policies on quality education. For example, the UPE policy focuses on increased access to education and automatic promotion. The liberalisation of the education sector accordingly operationalises the government's desire to increase access to education by allowing private education providers into the market.

7.3.2 Teachers' understanding of quality education as standards

The study findings revealed that participants' understanding of quality education with regard to standards related to academic performance, assessment based on scores and goal achievement. Specifically, the government sets performance standards centrally through the Ministry of Education and Sports and controls from a distance. The standards relate to the management of schools, the teaching curriculum, the school calendar, the classroom instruction modalities as well as standards for assessing learners. These standards were viewed by participants as the national education goals that education players must achieve in the bid to generate quality education.

With regard to how teachers practised quality education as standards, the findings revealed that teachers used guided discovery, group discussion, think-pair-share and finally, explanation, questions and answers. These methods are used in a way that requires the development of prior performance standards based on which teachers must assess whether pupils have learnt and mastered the subject matter. Thus, assessing learners' understanding was based on a predetermined set of standards based on examination scores.

Teachers were practising quality education the way they did with regard to standards due to the existence of national policies such as the national curriculum, the national calendar, the education sector strategic plan, licensing and operationalising schools, teachers' professional code of conduct and basic requirements and minimum standards indicators that articulate teaching standards, as well as learning outcomes, together with the unit of measure for performance at every level. These policies compel teachers to practise quality education in a certain manner within a framework of standards embedded in the policies.



The study findings also revealed that in the bid to obtain the best grades at the end of the primary school cycle, schools, especially the privately owned ones, have set up their own standards. For example, the use of specific school operational standards such as time for starting and ending classes, the use of a standard pass mark to promote pupils from one class to another, the use of the English language as the medium of instruction, and the practice of subjecting new entrants to a pre-entry exam for the purposes of admitting quality pupils. These school-based standards contradict the government's national policy on quality education. It is clear from the findings that the government is indirectly advantaging private schools and creating an environment in which market forces determine the quality of education pupils can get.

7.3.3 Teachers' understanding of quality education as accountability

From the perspective of quality education as accountability, the study findings revealed that participants understood quality education as financial accountability, improved school image, performance-related pay, academic competition and the institutionalisation of accountability systems in the education quality generation discourse. Their understanding articulates the interplay between two or more entities in which one entity must account to the other (s). The findings equally reflect that accountability is twofold, namely: there is accountability in the form of using improved results to account for the resources expended and poor results to depict lack of or insufficiency of resources invested in education quality generation.

Teachers practised quality education in the classrooms using cooperative learning, the circus method and then explanation, questions and answers. These methods were used in a way that enhanced the accountability function by holding pupils accountable for their actions and results in the entire teaching-learning process. Moreover, the methods provided a tool for assessing the teachers' levels of achievement and this would equally be reported to the school administration, parents and other education stakeholders.

The ways teachers practised quality education in the classroom within an accountability framework were directed by national policies, such as the UPE standard guidelines on accountability for funds, the automatic promotion policy that aimed at effective and efficient utilisation of government resources by eliminating waste through repeats and the liberalisation of the education sector with the aim of increasing access to education



and reduced government expenditure on education. This was intended to address other sectors and hold the education providing institutions more accountable. In addition to the national policies, schools had developed operational guidelines aimed at enhancing the accountability function. These include UPE and the quest for school fees to cater for the needs not met by government, looking after staff and pupil welfare with the purpose of increasing morale and providing a school environment that would support the realisation of quality education. Where teachers' and pupils' welfare is improved, dedication to teaching increases. Likewise, the absorption levels by pupils equally improve.

Throughout the three study themes, it was revealed that teachers' understanding and levels of professional competence greatly determine how they teach and what he/she delivers in the classroom. Teachers' understanding equally helps determine the best method to employ given the nature of the subject and the specific topic to be taught. However, they are not included in designing the policies that define and set quality standards. The prevailing state of quality education in Bushenyi district can be explained by the neoliberal movement in education that has revolutionised the education agenda with priority being placed on profit maximisation at the expense of the ideal traditional holistic teaching.

7.4 Contribution of the study

In this subsection, the contribution of the study findings to the academic world is presented. The presentation begins with the contribution the study makes to the initially held relationship in the conceptual framework, the alignment with the literature and finally the new knowledge that emerged from the study.

7.4.1 The linkage with the conceptual framework

The initially held assumption in the conceptual framework (figure 2) was that education has been a general concern of neoliberal ideology and has had an effect on the overall national policy orientation. The study findings agree with this position.

There was a perceived assumption by all study participants that the global neoliberal reform agenda has influenced educational national policy on quality primary education,



which affects teachers' classroom practices and the generation of quality education. The study findings reveal that there is indeed a neoliberal influence on Ugandan national policy on education. The education sector is driven by the standardised curriculum and examination regime with academic achievement determined by scores. Private education service providers operate freely as a result of the liberalisation of the education sector. This has been accompanied by competition among schools, with market choices determining where education seekers can obtain quality education.

The study initially perceived that the rationale for standards in education is to guide and regulate the conduct of all education providers. However, the findings differed in this regard. Whereas standards are set by the Ministry of Education and Sports, they are not followed by all the various schools, especially the privately owned ones. For example:

- (i) Private schools constantly teach beyond the set hours, and do not follow the national primary school calendar.
- (ii) They use English as the medium of instruction and communication from primary one, while the policy states that a local language should be used up to primary four.
- (iii) They administer entry examinations while the government policy articulates the need to increase access by registering every child of school-going age.
- (iv) In private schools, pupils who fail to get an average pass mark of 60% repeat classes.

Only a few government schools follow the policy as their counterpart private schools concentrate on teaching what will help pupils get the best grades at the end of primary seven. Despite these flaws, the government does not seem to be concerned. It is reducing its expenditure on education every year, thus exacerbating the teaching-learning conditions in government schools. This clearly shows the extent to which the government is pulling out of the education system and leaving the sector to the private providers. The implication is that education is becoming commercialised, as the parents have to take their children to private schools where the performance is rated better compared to government schools. This situation was not envisaged at the beginning of the study. Instead, it was assumed that national education standards are regulated and are followed by all institutions providing educational services.



Furthermore, the study indeed revealed that teachers' understanding of quality education is rich. The study findings revealed much more than the initially held position. With regard to three constructs of quality education the study findings transcended the three constructs and highlighted exactly what teachers perceived to be constituting each construct. For example, education as national development was revealed to be reflected by holistic training, good service, planning for the child's future to become a responsible citizen, empowerment and tolerance and the acquisition of competitive skills. Regarding quality education as standards, the findings pointed to the teachers' perceived dimensions of academic performance, assessment based on scores and goal achievement. In the case of quality education as accountability, perceived dimensions such as financial accountability, improved school image, performance related pay, academic competition and institutionalised accountability systems were brought to light. Despite this wider understanding, teachers' practice is constrained by what schools set as operational standards, in this regard teaching children for the purposes of passing with the best grades in the final examinations.

7.4.2 The linkage with the literature

Quality education as national development

There is consensus in the literature that quality education is a tool that stimulates social transformation and development (Akareem & Hossain, 2016; Awhen et al., 2014; Byamugisha & Ogawa, 2010; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008). New trends in education, especially as a result of the neoliberal reform agenda, emphasise the shaping of human qualities that reinforce economic growth and development based on individualism rather than collectivism, as well as the accumulation of individual wealth. More practically, to attain national growth and development, schools should always align their goals in such a way that they contribute to the national goals by improving the standards of achievement, and ensuring that children are able to compete globally. This requires training that empowers children with sufficient and relevant skills they can use in future in the global competitive markets to perform their jobs as demanded by their employees in the form of predetermined performance targets.

The literature also alludes to the fact that if education is to contribute to national development, national policies must address education quality bottlenecks. National



education goals must be articulated in national policies in a manner that is understood by diverse stakeholders that can make a contribution. The government must address the gaps that constrain the acquisition of modern and technological skills that drive the current global economy, as well as creating an environment in which the educated people can be absorbed into the market. This way, if education is to be relevant and constitute a foundation for national development, it should be strategically positioned and addressed in national specific policy documents in a manner that engages the practitioners at the foundational levels (Awhen et al., 2014; Death et al., 2015; Harlen, 2014). The practical reality, however, depicts that the neoliberal reforms create a different trend in terms of which the planned government withdrawal from the provision of social services, the reduction of government expenditure on education and the liberalisation of the education sector have shifted the policy formulation role from government to a few private individuals who own the education providing institutions. To this effect, therefore, it is clear that the accumulation of private profits, other than national development for the majority, is becoming an operational norm. Indeed, this is progressively creating social and economic inequalities other than holistic development.

Much as the study findings revealed that the Ugandan education sector is considered a pillar for national development through the training and realisation of human capital, the government has not done much to address the bottlenecks to the realisation of quality education. Instead, through national policies like the liberalisation of the education sector, quality education has become commercialised and left to the market forces. This has been to the detriment of parents who cannot afford to send their children to the better performing schools. Thus, education appears to be creating social inequalities. The challenge of unemployed educated citizens also threatens the logical linkage between education and national development. Additionally, there is the challenge inherent in focusing on education that is not relevant to the needs of the citizens, especially when the relevant stakeholders such as teachers who implement education interventions are left behind. Importantly, emerging from these research findings was the fact that operational level practitioners, that is the classroom teachers, have not been consulted on the existing national policies on quality education. This is despite the fact their understanding of quality education, which has not been included in the policies, guides the way they teach and assess learners. With the practice targeting the best scores as the assessment measure of academic achievement, there is no possibility of education



contributing to national development. Instead, it is leading to a regime in which education is graduating citizens who can only perform a specific job without exhibiting any innovativeness, merely compliance with the employer. There remains doubts as to whether there can be sustainable development when the economy and wealth are controlled by a few rich citizens.

Quality education as standards

The available literature attests that standards in the education sector are guidelines aimed at regulating and conducting the training-learning process in a more harmonised framework for the purposes of generating uniformity in learning outcomes. These standards are defined by the state in a curriculum that spells out the kind of knowledge to be taught. Quality education in this regard depends on minimum standards being set for the purpose of measuring change, with these standards referring to the content of certain activities and also relating to how such activities are prepared, delivered and evaluated (Linyuan, 2012; Peercy et al., 2017).

The notion of setting standards in the context of education is guided by the thinking that unifying the content, methods of delivery, learning outcomes and assessment modalities, in the belief that the standards set at the national level, will feed directly into the planned and attained standards by different players at the school level (Peercy et al., 2017). Although this presents an ideal and desired position, the practice on the contrary, as revealed by the study findings, is completely different.

The study findings revealed that schools, teachers and learners fall into different categories and have differing capacities and orientations. The variations in classroom management, pedagogical skills, learners' competencies and so forth make the use of national standards an illusion in the generation of quality education. Besides, in the Ugandan education system, as the findings revealed, lack of teacher inclusion in the formulation of standards creates a huge disparity when matching the ideal standards and what the government sets. Moreover, the study findings reveal that due to the functionality of market forces in determining the demand for quality education, education managers, especially those running private schools no longer follow the set national standards. For example, as hinted on under section 7.4.1, private schools appear to be running based on their school specific standards, which actually contravene the



national standards that the government has set. This study, therefore, found that the presence of national standards at the national level does not affect the operations of private schools in the teaching-learning process, which focus on the end results in the form of scores. This disadvantages the government-aided schools that endeavour to follow the national standards. The question may be asked as to why the government sets standards but does not make the prerequisites for realising and working within the set standards available to schools. This study attests to the fact that with the liberalisation of the education sector in Uganda, the government is leaving the sector to the private operators and this poses a threat to the quality of primary education in the country, as foundations for effective and holistic teaching and learning are overtaken by targeted teaching for obtaining the best scores. In effect, standards are no longer voluntary as they ought to be but rather mandatory for academic excellence and achievement.

Quality education as accountability

The literature portrays the fact that accountability is both a goal and a tool for meeting educational standards in the current global educational reform movement. Practically, accountability manages the relationship that exists between the actors and the stakeholders. The stakeholders, for example the government, local leaders, parents and other institutions, have an interest in what the actors, especially teachers and pupils, do (which include perceptions, practices and the outcomes of their activities). Accountability is a mechanism that proves the worth of government and management expenditure in education by holding the relevant actors answerable for poor performance (Arbeiter & Harley, 2010; Bovens, 2005; Gill et al., 2016; Hutchings, 2015; Moyi, 2013; Rasmussen & Zou, 2014).

In the Ugandan context, in a bid to enhance the accountability function, the government introduced the policy of decentralising public service delivery which empowered district authorities to develop, approve and implement their development plans, inclusive of education plans (Winsor Consult Rwanda & Measure Africa, 2016). With the introduction of UPE, the government also introduced the automatic promotion policy aimed at reducing the cost of education per learner resulting from repeats of classes as a form of accounting for public resources. With regard to ensuring effective financial accountability of government funds in the primary education sector, the government, through the Ministry of Education and Sports, issued guidelines on how the school's



facility grant should be spent. The capitation grant is released on the basis of pupil enrolments. These funds provide for the free UPE the government capitalises on to highlight its effective use of public resources to increase access to primary education.

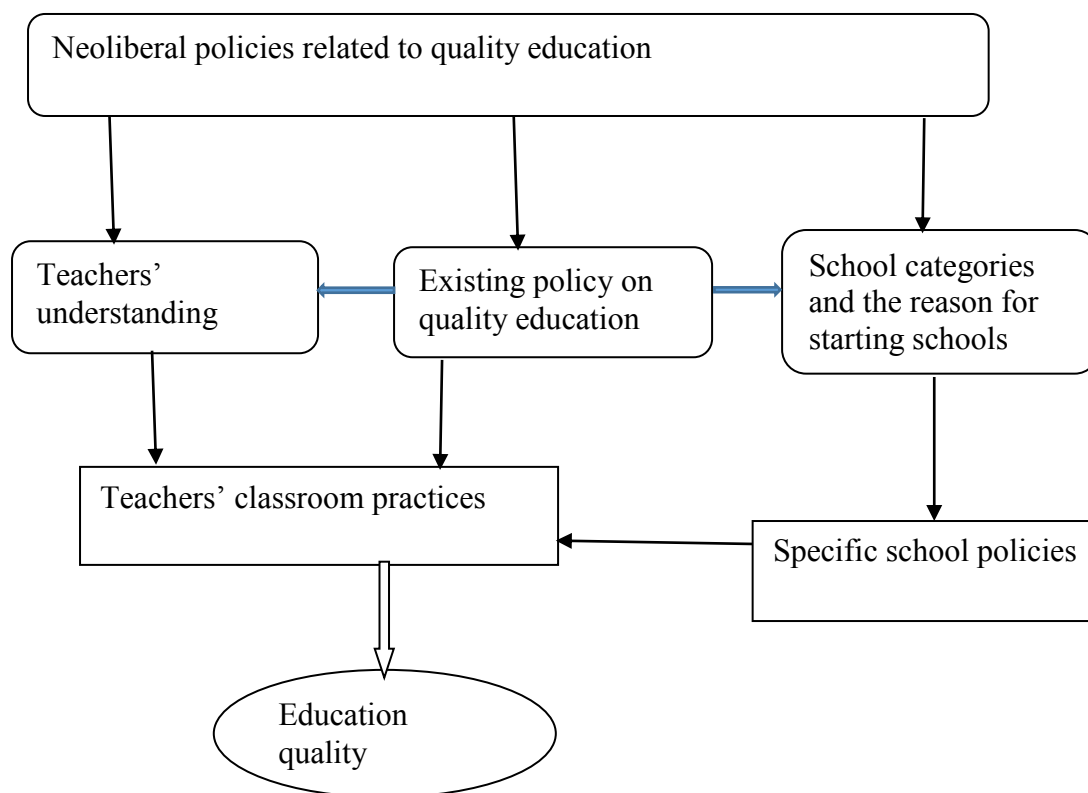
However, the findings by this study reveal that the funds government releases to schools in the form of capacitation grants and school facility grants is not sufficient to cater for children's needs such as classrooms, school uniform, food and instructional materials. The government has not been able to even provide enough teachers. In all the government-aided schools, the SCM had opted to allow the recruitment of extra teachers paid for by parents to fill the manpower gaps. There are also insufficient resources such as instructional materials and teachers' houses. Parents are equally supposed to provide stationery, uniform and food for their children. Thus, the notion of free education does not exist in the UPE policy implementation process in Uganda. The study emphasises the need to redefine UPE from the connotation of free education to cost-sharing of primary education so that parents are aware of their role in the entire primary education accountability framework.

Further, the study findings revealed that the current accountability function in Ugandan primary schools has gone beyond the forms of accountability articulated in the literature. Accordingly, the accountability function has been revealed to be a market-driven enterprise where education managers and teachers have focused teaching on improved performance based on standardised scores. There is now an economic function in terms of which schools that get the best grades and attract more pupils therefore make more profits. The government appears to have created an environment that is conducive to this phenomenon, allowing it thrive by liberalising the education sector, reducing its expenditure on education and setting standards based on performativity and standardised scores as a means through which education institutions can provide accountability to the public. This has taken root among the private schools to the detriment of government-aided schools. With the proof of better scores, government-aided schools are losing numbers to privately owned schools. For example, one of the privately owned schools had a total enrolment of 1800 pupils, a number that was equivalent to the total enrolment in four government-aided schools, with one of these schools having a total enrolment of 131 pupils.

7.4.3 New knowledge

In the previous sections (7.4.1 and 7.4.2), I presented the way in which the study findings relate to the initially held thinking as per the relationship in the conceptual framework and in the available literature. Cases of conformity and disagreements have been pointed out. In this subsection, I encapsulate the two strands (the study linkages with the literature and conceptual framework) and come up with the new knowledge the study findings bring to the academe. Of interest here is the fact that the study findings reveal that teachers have a rich understanding of quality education. However, their classroom practices with regard to generating quality education are influenced by the global neoliberal reform agenda in education that has revolutionised national policy formulation, as well as the way in which they perceive quality education. In the attempt to point out the new knowledge the study findings bring, I first make a summary depicting the alignment of the study findings. This is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The alignment of the study findings



The figure illustrates that critical to the perceptions participants hold on the quality of primary education, is the global neoliberal reform agenda in education. The neoliberal discourse has directed and shaped countries' national policies on education, where



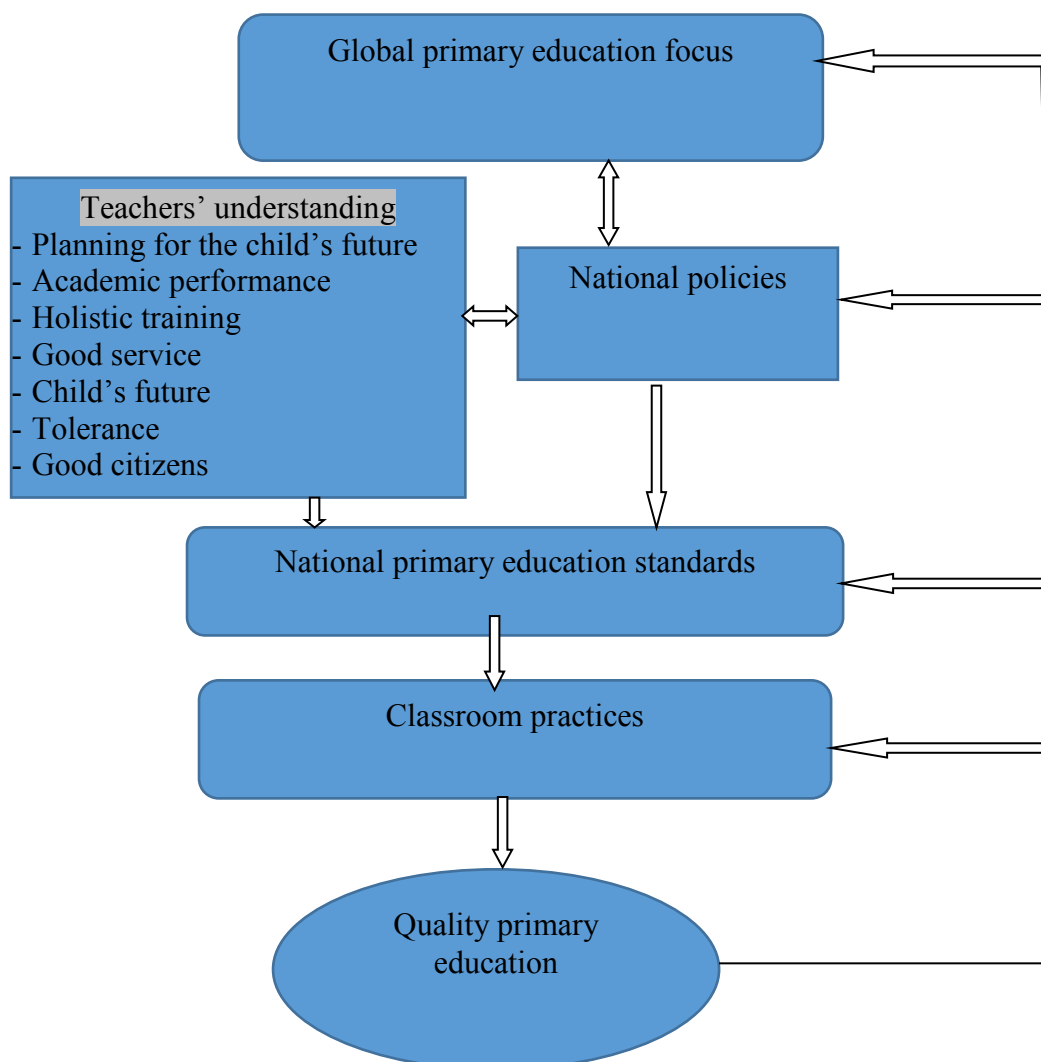
nations have focused on increased access to education through the liberalisation of the education sector, reduced government expenditure on education, the play of market forces and associated competition in education, the use of standards scores in education as well as holding individual schools accountable for their actions. This trend has directly affected schools' specific policies, which are formulated with a strong inclination to the global neoliberal movement. Teachers have not been involved in the process of formulating such policies and standards they are accountable for. Teachers' classroom practices have also been influenced by this trend though they still reckon with what ideal quality education should entail and an inclination to the human capital ideology. The way teachers deliver quality interventions is also influenced by a number of factors, such as the environment, welfare, the availability of instructional materials and so forth. The existing parity based on the school type is also explained by the global neoliberal policies on education with government schools performing poorly compared to their private counterparts.

Based on the study findings, I propose a model that can be used to improve the quality of primary education by including teachers' understandings in the process of designing policies and setting standards in the education sector. The model is called Teacher Inclusion in Quality Education Discourse (TIQED). The TIQED model presupposes that teachers' understandings and the way they train pupils in schools should not be taken for granted. Thus, teachers should be consulted when designing quality standards and frameworks for assessing quality. The study findings reveal that teachers understand quality education from different standpoints, such as holistic training, good service, planning for the child's future, tolerance, good citizenship, academic excellence, and so forth. However, the current practice of quality education in Ugandan primary schools is based on academic excellence only, which is determined by standardised scores, something that has been influenced by the global neoliberal reform movement.

Moreover, based on teachers' wider understanding of quality education, the model proposes that the learner should not only be evaluated on the basis of their performance in class tests and exams. This is based on the fact that teachers' rich understanding of quality education goes beyond the standardised test and examination scores. Secondly, human beings are gifted differently and success in life is not just a factor of high scores in standardised exams. Thus, the definition of quality education should transcend the

academic excellence notion to incorporate other strands that prepare the child for future survival and meaningful contribution to improved human welfare and sustainable national development. The proposed model, together with the embedded components are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Proposed TIQED model for generating quality primary education



The model presupposes that teachers' understanding should be central to the design and implementation of education quality policies, interventions and standards. The model recognises that though the global education focus transcends other implementation levels such as national and school context realities, it cannot exist without the lower level realities. Thus, constituting global educational realities and outcomes must emanate from the lower levels for effective alignment and ease within the implementation process.



It is held that once teachers are consulted, their views can be utilised to formulate national policies that can further shape the global education context, through the realisation of national targets. Teachers' contributions and understanding of the quality education parameters should be used to set national primary education standards as well as to direct the way in which quality education should be generated and assessed. This is likely to generate education that is not based on academic excellence alone but rather on holistic education that is sustainable given the diverse meanings that teachers attach to quality education. The targeted nature of education quality should be reflected at all levels. This will call for education quality checks right away at the classroom, school, national and global level.

Adopting the TIQED model would have implications occasioning certain changes to the primary education sector as a whole as the discussion below highlights:

- (i) First, for the government, especially the MoES, there would be need for a participatory framework in which any policy related to quality education would begin by engaging the teachers who implement the education quality interventions in the classroom. As the study findings attest, classroom teachers have a multidimensional understanding of quality education but because the policies are centrally designed with minimal or no teacher consultation, their rich understanding and lived experiences are not taken into account. Their inclusion in the education policy design process, therefore, would end the current practice in which teachers believe they are used as mere tools to implement government policies. The government's will in engaging teachers is critical to the adoption of the model. The government's will should also be merited in the design and implementation of supportive policies.
- (ii) Secondly, for the school managers at both the private and government-aided schools, the model would call for management support and investment in the acquisition of the non-academic facilities necessary for enhancing the holistic teaching of pupils. This implies that the facilities to be procured should go beyond the academic and classroom facilities to include those that enhance sports and curriculum activities, as well as vocational and talent development.
- (iii) Thirdly, once the model is adopted, there will be a need for primary school curriculum reform in order to come up with and incorporate new life skills-based



topics and assessment modalities in the curriculum. There will also be a need for a complete shift from the current classroom-based school calendar to a new one that will include non-academic topics such life skills that can guarantee a child's survival beyond their academic school life. This will help cater for different learner abilities and talents in the formal school plans. Assessment modalities and corresponding learning outcomes will also be necessary in this regard.

- (iv) Lastly, for community members, especially parents, the model, once adopted, implies an additional cost in meeting the requirements of the non-academic areas that will constitute some of the evaluation parameters for the pupils' quality education. The cost might be met by the purchase of skills training kits and other necessities in the process of field placements for apprenticeships.

7.5 Limitations of the study

The study was informed by twenty-four face-to-face interviews and six classroom observations with participants from six selected primary schools in Bushenyi district. This study generated data from three rural-based and three urban-based schools drawn from government-founded schools, church-founded schools and privately-founded and owned schools. The data collected from the sampled schools cannot be generalised to the entire district or the country. The study's strength is embedded in the qualitative research approach which emphasises small samples that are studied in detail. Indeed, appropriate measures were taken to ensure that sufficient time was given to each school visited; at least two visits were made to each school with follow-up phone calls to clarify unclear data in order to ensure data consistency and comprehensiveness.

The study also encountered the challenge of insufficient resources. First, the selected rural schools were situated a long way from district headquarters and the main road. This implied that more time and fuel was needed to canvass all the targeted schools. Moreover, as the researcher's scholarship had been terminated there was no financial support for the fieldwork. To overcome this challenge, I had to mobilise additional financial resources from family members and friends to ensure that the data collection exercise was completed on time. I also had to commute from my village home to avoid additional expenditure on accommodation and food.



Another limitation was linked to the sample. The study used teachers and head teachers to collect the necessary data on how teachers understand and practise quality education in the classrooms. The findings, therefore, showed the understanding of quality education from the supply side. Given the study's foundation in the neoliberal reform agenda in education, characterised by free market enterprise and competition in the education sector, it would have been better to equally include the parents, pupils, government officials in the Ministry of Education and Sports and even policy makers in the study to have a widened understanding of quality primary education, especially from the demand side. It is envisaged that that a blend of the supply and demand part of educational quality may help put in place all-round measures to address educational quality bottlenecks.

7.6 Conclusions

At the beginning of this study, the background and foundation for the problem statement were anchored to the effects of the global neoliberalism reform agenda in the education sector. As I conclude this study, I wish to reiterate that foundation and recapitulate the study findings in order to make inferences based thereon. Hence, the current understanding of quality primary education in Uganda and the way teachers practise quality education in the classroom follow national standards spelt out in the curriculum and national policies that have indeed been precipitated by the global neoliberal reforms. Despite teachers' wider understanding of quality education, they find themselves training pupils in a manner that corresponds with the set standards evaluated by examination scores. This way, schools that get the best grades prove more accountable to the dynamics of the global market conditions and will attract more pupils and, thus, make more profits.

It is clear from the study findings that despite the Ugandan government assertion that is has invested in free primary education since 1997, there has been minimal improvement in the quality of primary education. The education sector is characterised by competition, individualism and the accumulation of individual wealth. The government's withdrawal from the provision of education has progressively led to the commercialisation of education and the creation of both schools that perform better and those that lack facilities and, thus, perform poorly. Access to the better performing schools depends on the parents' ability to meet the price of education in such schools.



Children from poor families continue to score poorly in the standardised tests and national exams. This implies that they will not have the same employment opportunities in future compared to children whose parents are able to afford the school fees in league table private schools. This will ultimately create a cycle of generational poverty and significant social inequalities rather than sustainable and equitable development.

7.7 Recommendations

In view of the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

- (i) The government through the line ministry, the MoES, should redesign the quality education parameters to go beyond academic performance to incorporate virtues of holistic teaching and learning, tolerance, citizenship, planning for the child's future and gaining of survival skills beyond the formal education and the associated formal jobs.
- (ii) To avoid policy implementation mishaps, the government should embrace a participatory approach in the education policy design and formulation process. Even the modalities for setting quality education standards and assessment should reflect ideas from the actual implementers of the education quality interventions. Specifically, there is a need to incorporate the classroom teachers' views on what makes up quality education such that the policy intentions are clearly understood by the actual implementers.
- (iii) Continuing with current state of the Ugandan primary education policy, the government should pronounce itself on the practical framework of running UPE schools. The findings have shown that even in the government-aided schools, parents are still required to make financial and material contributions towards their children's learning process. This has been mainly in the form of salary contributions for teachers not on the government payroll, school uniform, lunch and learning materials. A declaration of cost sharing other than free education that is not practical is envisaged as an effective plan that would help parents drop the perception of free education and embark on mobilising resources to supplement government capacitation and school facilities grants that are never sufficient.
- (iv) The study recommends that government should invest in procuring and supplying schools with the necessary and sufficient resources to aid classroom instruction. Moreover, funds should be reserved for on-the-job training courses



to cater for teacher in-service training for the purposes of ensuring that classroom teachers are not overtaken by events and changes in the education environment. Individual school management could also take responsibility for organising on-the-job training courses for teachers.

- (v) The government should mobilise resources to address the welfare needs of teachers and pupils. Of interest here is accommodation and food for both teachers and pupils as well as providing a relatively favourable remuneration package for teachers. This is envisaged to raise teachers' morale and in turn their enthusiasm for and dedication to teaching.
- (vi) For the purposes of uniformity in education, government needs to urgently strengthen her monitoring and supervision role to ensure that all schools, irrespective of their ownership, follow and implement the national standards. With standards implementation differences, government-aided schools will continue to perform poorly, just as private schools that negate the operational standards will continuously excel.

7.8 Areas for further research

This study recognises that knowledge creation cannot be addressed by a single study. Based on this foundation and emerging from the study findings, areas for further research have been suggested. They include the following:

This study focused on teachers' understanding and classroom practices in generating quality in Ugandan primary education. The study was foregrounded within the neoliberal discourse and focused on the supply side of education by generating primary data only from head teachers and teachers who practise and implement quality education policies and interventions in the classroom. The study did not look at the demand side of education in the understanding of quality education. Thus, a study aimed at generating views on the understanding of quality from the demand side of education, for example by interviewing parents and learners, could be of an interest to future researchers.

The current study concentrated on teachers' understanding and classroom practices of quality education in the Ugandan primary education sector. Owing to its qualitative nature, in which a case study research design was used, one district of Bushenyi was



studied. It is, therefore, suggested that for the purposes of covering the entire country, a more representative sample should be used and a survey be conducted to help compare results across different districts and regions.

A quantitative study could also be done to ascertain the factors responsible for the quality of primary education, together with their various levels of contribution. This may assist in understanding the reasons for the current quality flaws in the Ugandan primary education system apart from concentrating only on teachers' understanding and classroom practices. By doing so, policy priorities can be set to address areas that contribute.

In order to understand the quality of education in a country, it is suggested that the entire national education system should be studied to ascertain system-level linkages. The current study concentrated only on the primary school sector. It is thus proposed that a study be conducted to understand the education quality trends at all levels of the Ugandan education sector. Such a study should be comprehensive and longitudinal so as to follow up on learners' progress and systemic linkages from the pre-primary, to the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. This would help ascertain the most challenged level of education and, therefore, facilitate the formulation of education sector-wide policies to plan holistically for the future learning outcomes.



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APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am *Anaclet Mutiba Namanya*, a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. I am doing research titled “**Teachers’ Understanding and Practices of Quality Education in Ugandan Primary Education**” as part of the requirements for the award of a PhD. This study is purely an individual undertaking and has no external form of support. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research.

Purpose of the research

The main objective of this study is to investigate how teachers’ understanding and classroom practices affect the generation of quality education in primary schools in Uganda.

Type of research intervention

This research will involve your participation in an interview (for both head teachers and teachers) and a classroom observation (for teachers). Each will last an hour.

Participant selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because it is believed that your experience as an education manager can contribute towards the comprehension of teachers’ understanding and their classroom teaching and instructional methodology in the generation of quality education. Your selection has no prior knowledge and interest. Twelve participants (six head teachers and six classroom teachers) will be interviewed in the study. Six classroom teachers will also be observed while conducting lessons.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your job. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Conflict of interest

The investigator declares that there is no conflict of interest of any kind. The writing of the report will be based on the actual views given by participants.



Procedures

You are asked to help in the understanding of quality education especially with regard to teachers' understanding and classroom teaching and instructional methodology. You are invited to take part and, if you accept, you will be requested to respond to questions. Our discussion will be recorded. The head teacher will also be requested to share some school documents

Duration

The research will take place over a period of one month. During this time, you will be visited once or at least twice. Each visit will last for about one hour.

Risks and benefits

There are no risks anticipated not are there any direct benefits accruing from participating in this study. However, your participation is hoped to provide useful information that can help integrate policy and practice in the understanding of quality education in Uganda.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research. However, you will be given 20,000 Ugandan shillings as a token of appreciation for your valuable time.

Confidentiality

The information provided will be kept completely confidential and anonymity is guaranteed in the course of writing and reporting the findings of the study. The information that will be collected from this research will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name or school. Pseudonyms for schools will be adopted for the purposes of coding data. Only the researcher will know what your number is. Care will be taken to keep the information under lock and key.

Sharing the results

Nothing that you tell us today will be shared with anybody outside the research team, and nothing will be attributed to you by name. The knowledge that we get from this research will only be used to compile a thesis for a PhD. You will be provided with feedback of the progress and findings of the study.

Right to refuse or withdraw



You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will not affect your job in any way. You may stop participating in the interview at any time that you wish.

Who to contact

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mildmay Uganda Ethics Research Committee (MUREC), which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find more about the MUREC and this study, contact Dr Christine Nabiryo on telephone number 0392-174-236, email: murec@mildmay.or.ug or the principal investigator Anaclet Mutiba Namanya on telephone number +256752484221, e-mail: anacletmutiba@gmail.com



Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have read the foregoing information, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print name of participant _____

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and that all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

The participant has been given a copy of the consent form .

Name of researcher/person taking the consent: **ANACLET MUTIBA NAMANYA**

Signature of researcher/person taking the consent _____

Date _____

Day/month/year/

Telephone: +256752484221, e-mail: anacletmutiba@gmail.com



APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

General information

- School category
- How long have you been a teacher?
- How long have you been at this school?
- What subjects do you teach?
- What is your highest level of education?

Study-specific questions

1. Can you share your understanding of quality primary education with me?
2. Are there national documents you have that guide the teaching-learning process in primary schools? If yes, what documents do you have?
3. Are there specific teaching methodologies you use in instructing pupils? If yes, can you mention those methodologies?
4. Under what circumstances do you use such methodologies?
5. How would you rate the effectiveness of these methodologies? Please explain.
6. How would you link the classroom practices of teachers and the quality of primary education? Please explain.
7. Are there standards you follow to ensure quality education? If yes, can you mention those standards?
8. How is the assessment of pupils in primary schools conducted?
9. Can you explain how pupils are promoted from one level to another?
10. How effective is the current practice of promoting pupils?
11. What is the current practice of setting education standards in terms of teacher consultations and participation?
12. What can you comment on the academic performance of students as measured by test and examination results? Is there room for improvement?
13. Are teachers held responsible for the quality of education in this school, if yes how?
14. Is the school succeeding in providing quality education?
15. What is it that the school can do better to improve the quality of education?
16. How would you advise the government in the bid to improve the quality of primary education in Uganda?

Thank you



APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEAD TEACHERS

General information

- School category
- How long have you been a head teacher?
- How long have you been at this school?
- How many teachers are there at this school? How many pupils?
- What is your highest level of education?

Study-specific questions

1. Can you share your understanding of quality primary education with me?
2. How would you describe the trend of quality education in this school and the country for the last five years?
3. Are you aware of national policies that address the quality of primary education in Uganda?
4. How relevant are these policies for primary school teachers and head teachers?
5. How are these policies implemented in your school?
6. What teaching methodologies do teachers use in this school?
7. How effective are these methodologies?
8. To what extent do teachers allow pupils to participate in teaching and learning?
9. How would you link the classroom practices of teachers and the quality of primary education?
10. Are there certain standards you follow in the primary education sector to ensure quality education? If yes, mention those standards.
11. How is the assessment of pupils in primary schools conducted?
12. Can you explain how pupils are promoted from one level to another? (Probe to find out the effectiveness levels thereof.)
13. How common is it to find schools with their own guidelines for generating quality education?
14. Do teachers participate in setting education quality standards? Please explain.
15. How do you account for the performance of your school?
16. Suggest what you would like to see happen at this school to improve the quality of education?
17. What would you advise the government to do if the quality of primary education is to be improved in Uganda?

Thank you



APPENDIX IV: LESSON OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

1. School
2. Grade
3. Subject/learning area
4. Topic
5. Number of pupils in the class

Detailed notes on:

6. Classroom environment
7. Aims of the lesson
8. Content/skills which students are expected to learn
9. Teaching methods
10. Student participation
11. Resources the teacher uses
12. Resources students are required to use
13. Assessment of the lesson aims
14. Teachers' pedagogical practices
15. Anything striking about the lesson

In addition, focus on studying the following documents:

Teachers' files and lesson plans

Teachers' records of student assessments

Students' writing books



APPENDIX V: DOCUMENT REVIEW CHECKLIST

The document review will be conducted using the teachers' files, official curricular documents, school strategic plans and policy documents for both the specific schools and at the national level:

(a) *For the specific school documents, the focus will be on:*

1. Enrolment rates and trends
2. Total number of pupils per class
3. What guides the marking of class exercises and tests
4. Academic results
5. Completion rates per class and overall at primary seven compared with primary one
6. Individual school policies on educational quality
7. Existence of national policy on quality in the various schools
8. Roles and responsibilities of teachers as regards quality education
9. Performance trends in the internal and external examinations
10. Accountability mechanisms and focus

(b) *For the national documents, the focus will be on:*

1. Policy design and level of teacher consultation and engagement
2. Policy content and guiding principles
3. Roles and responsibilities of teachers
4. Implementation strategies
5. Changes over time

END



**APPENDIX VI: ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER FROM UGANDA
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**



Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

(Established by Act of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda)

Dear Anaclet Namanya,

I am pleased to inform you that on **31/10/2017**, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) approved your study titled, **Teachers' Understanding and Classroom Practices of Quality Education in Ugandan Primary Education**. The Approval is valid for the period of **31/10/2017** to **31/10/2018**.

Your study reference number is **SS124ES**. Please, cite this number in all your future correspondences with UNCST in respect of the above study.

Please, note that as Principal Investigator, you are responsible for:

1. Keeping all co-investigators informed about the status of the study.
2. Submitting any changes, amendments, and addenda to the study protocol or the consent form, where applicable, to the designated local Research Ethics Committee (REC) or Lead Agency, where applicable, for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes.
3. Notifying UNCST about the REC or lead agency approved changes, where applicable, within five working days.
4. For clinical trials, reporting all serious adverse events promptly to the designated local REC for review with copies to the National Drug Authority.
5. Promptly reporting any unanticipated problems involving risks to study subjects/participants to the UNCST.
6. Providing any new information which could change the risk/benefit ratio of the study to the UNCST for review.
7. Submitting annual progress reports electronically to UNCST. Failure to do so may result in termination of the research project.

Please, note that this approval includes all study related tools submitted as part of the application.

Yours sincerely,

Hellen Opolot

For: Executive Secretary

UGANDA NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



APPENDIX VII: CLEARANCE LETTER BY MILD MAY UGANDA
RESEARCH AND ETHICS COMMITTEE



Research Ethics Committee (MUREC)

10 October 2017

Anaclet Mutiba Namanya
University of Pretoria

Dear Anaclet:

Re: Initial approval of your Research protocol: #RECREP 0606-2017 "Teachers' Understanding and Classroom Practices of Quality Education in Ugandan Primary Education: A Case of Bushenyi District."

Thank you for submitting an application for approval of the above referenced protocol to MUREC.

I am glad to inform you that approval is hereby given to conduct the study; this approval is given following your exhaustive responses to initial comments raised by MUREC. This approval is for one year, effective 10th October 2017 and will expire on 10th October 2018. Extension beyond this expiry date and changes to the protocol including data collection tools must be brought to the attention of MUREC.

However, before you proceed you are required to submit the protocol to Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) for registration.

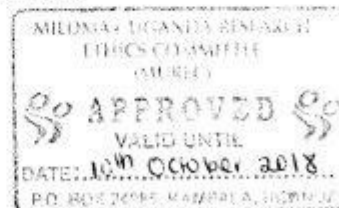
You are also required to provide progress reports at an annual interval, to notify Mildmay Uganda Research Committee on completion, as well as when publishing results.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

I wish you success in this endeavor.

Yours Sincerely,

Mary Oditi
Vice chairperson,
Mildmay Uganda Research Ethics Committee (MUREC)



Location/ Correspondence
Mildmay Uganda
Plot 27, Lweza
P.O.Box 24985, Kampala

Communication
Tel: 0392174236
Email: murec@mildmay.or.ug
WWW.MILD MAY.ORG/UGANDA



APPENDIX VIII: AUTHORISATION LETTER FROM THE DEO

BUSHENYI-ISHAKA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Email: bushenyiishaka@gmail.com

Telegraphic Address:

Our Ref No. BIMC/EDc/101



Office of the Municipal Education Officer

P. O. Box 195

BUSHENYI - UGANDA

Date: 16/10/2017

The Executive Secretary,
Uganda National Council for Science & Technology,
Plot 6, Kimera Road,
P.O Box 6884, Kampala, Uganda

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: CLEARANCE FOR MR. ANACLET MUTIBA NAMANYA TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BUSHENYI-ISHAKA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL.

I have been approached by Mr. Namanya for official permission to conduct research on "*Teachers understandings and classroom practices of quality education in Ugandan Primary education: The case of Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipal Council*" as per of his PhD studies. The main objective of this study is to investigate how teachers understand and practice quality education in primary schools.

In order to achieve this objective, he needs to interview classroom teachers and headteachers from selected primary schools in the district. He also wishes to observe lessons and study some related documents. The data collection process will not interfere with the daily running of the schools. Appointments fitting in the respondents' schedule will be sought.

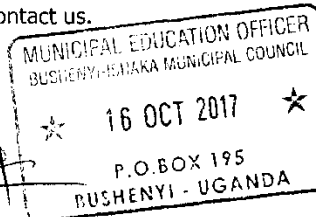
We hope the findings will help make a significant contribution towards improving the quality of primary education in the district and Uganda in general.

The Municipal Council recommends him to conduct the study. For any information, do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,


Mugenyi Dan

MUNICIPAL EDUCATION OFFICER



Cc: Anaclet Mutiba Nuwamanya.



APPENDIX IX: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION FOR TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

ID: T2

General Information

- School category: **Privately owned, Urban**
- For how long have you been a teacher? **7 years**
- For how long have you been at this school? **FIVE years**
- Which subjects do you teach? **I teach English and RE**
- What is your highest level of education? **Grade V**

1. **What is your understanding of quality education/ What comes into your mind when someone talks about Quality Education?** Quality Education, at a Primary Level or any level? **We can begin with any level and then scale it to down to primary** Any level of education, because at any level, there is what we call qualifications. When someone qualifies, it means someone has the credits to see them to be worth of what they are supposed to be. For instance, If a child is in primary, to leave primary in Uganda that child must attain at least aggregate 28. And if a child can get 28, that is not quality education because that is the last mark. So if a child can get the best mark, because when we talk about quality, can a child for instance, in a primary level, we expect a child to be equipped with knowledge, skills, to be able to read and write and general understanding of what he is going through. So if a child can easily read and write, and has a general understanding of what he is going through – because when you see how the curriculum of Uganda was set, it was set in a way to develop the child's mind in a way – for instance if you are teaching a child in primary say six, a child learns safety on the road, a child learns how to debate and engage people in a descent conversation, a child learns about occupations such that even if a child does not continue with education in the education line to earn money through a white collar job, he can know occupations like baking, animal keeping, carpentry so that irrespective of getting good aggregates at P.7, a child is able to sustain his life. I have a feeling that education that is qualitative, is the one which makes some one sustain his life when class is attended.



Is that what you emphasise at this school? That is what we are aiming at. Specifically we may not aim at nurturing this child to end at P.7 but we want to play our role very well such that in case may be something happens and a child stops at P7, he is able to survive. For instance, maybe I may give you another background like when a child is in primary five, among the topics that a child is supposed to learn is vehicle repair and maintenance. **Okk**, if this child has got money and moved out of school and is on the road, can he replace a tyre on his own. There is print media, check – if you want to hide anything from Africans, put it in writing. Majority Africans do not like reading so we find it interesting when we are teaching to teach these children how to read newspapers in that line, such that a child is able to read a newspaper because there is letter writing because even when he has stopped at P.7, he can be able to write an application letter to look for a job. It also teaches culture for instance, in culture, we learn tolerance (these are Bakonjo, these are Bakiga, these are Bahima, Banyankore) but can we leave in the same community and in that line, if education can teach tolerance, it means we shall not get people who are outside volatile and aggressive because they know how to tolerate people of different culture and of different age. Specifically, that is what we are trying to teach these children irrespective of other challenges that we encounter on our way. **Sure, sure, good, good!**

2. Are there National policy guidelines that you know that talk about quality of education?

- Now, when the government noticed there were problems in numeracy (numbers) and literacy (understanding), the government put in place thematic curriculum (according to study themes) and sorely, teaching here is done in a language that is understood in that particular area. It is not in vernacular but for instance if we are in Ankole and the greatest number is Banyankole, then we shall use Runyankole up to P.3 such that by P4 when we are coming to a transitional stage of the curriculum, at that level, a child is able to understand. Even when you put it at your own level, when you want to speak, you first conceptualise it in your local language. With a thematic curriculum, a child is able to understand from the context first and this helps produce quality education.

Ok, so there is thematic curriculum, any other?

- Aaah at P.4, WE have the Transitional curriculum that is subject-based. Transition now tries to bring in subjects and it is the one we continue with up to upper primary because



here were are trying to combine Literacy One and Two to make SST, then Science, Maths and English.

And for this particular school, are there specific guidelines that the school has put in place to guide teachers and pupils reflect on the need to have quality education?

- Yes, for instance besides producing students just through the line of education, we find it very important for a child for instance to leave primary and go to a secondary school when he is able to make a speech in English. So, we have made English the official language at school. It is the mode of communication in the school.
- To manage the young ones, you should be a friend. I know all the children here. I talk to them and encourage them to tell me if they have problems. I present those problems to the head teacher for action.
- And the school has also put on the ground a hand writing project. This one makes uniform hand writing to every child because legibly written work makes it easy for the person reading the work to come out even and interpret it qualitatively because if the work is not written well, it may not come out perfectly.
- Besides, we also grade learners according to their ability so that we can help them accordingly. Grading them according to their ability helps us to know slow learners or time takers in time so that they can be given extra time and remedials, because remedials are accepted irrespective of coaching. But we can give them extra time because their way of learning is not the same. So, the geniuses are put alone and do it quickly, then those who are time takers are given time. So even when the teacher is going there, you go when you are patient. He will know that these people take time. Just like we are different on faces, so is our understanding. **Quite interesting!**

3. Let's now move on and look at the classroom facilitation and environment. What training methodology do you employ as a teacher to deliver a lesson?

- Mhh, among them, we use explanation.
- We use demonstration, and we also use
- Think-Pair and Share and in think-pair share, here you pair the children to share a thought and thereafter, they share among the whole class. **Ok!** I have given you a challenging question and I say you two discuss it at your table level. You discuss it a



table level, thinking together, they share what they have and then they bring it now to the class – think-pair share.

- Then we have discussion, where by now you accept the learners to get into a discussion. It can be open or be guided by the teacher
- We also have guided discovery – where by in guided discovery, it is more less related to explanation, but you explain guiding a learner to reach a point of discovery on his own. We also don't need to be spoon-feeding where by you are lecturing. So, you guide them to discover on their own. It actually helps them so much. **Ok!**
- Then we have group work.
- Then we also have circus method. **How does that work?** Aahh, in circus method, you give – it actually trains punctuality and time management because you give – you set work on different tables, say you put something to deal with mathematics, there to deal with science, here SST, here English. Then you put them in a group, they are moving like in a circus. Each group does the work, finishes and leaves the work there. And when they move, the teacher picks for marking. A group which has a problem with Mathematics will easily be identified because they won't finish. It is about time; how are you going to finish and how much time do you need? So, it is like that and they do it because it is participatory; every learner is involved. **It appears to be extraordinarily interesting!**

4. We can now look at assessment criteria. How do you assess learners in this school?

Assessment? **Yes.** Besides, the summative, which comes at the end, every day, we give exercises – after every lesson that you have handled, we give out exercises.

- We also give homework and homework is basically based on what you have taught so that the child gets home and also sits with the book and gets to memorise. **Mhhh!**
- Then we also have our internal examinations. Internal examinations, then
- We are also adopting a new system; spot-on exams; where by now, in the internal examinations, you give this teacher an ample time to prepare children the way he wants them. But in spot-on exams, the children are there, you want to see; where have they reached? So you just get them there and tell them that for instance, in the next 30 minutes, we shall have an examination. This one comes when the teacher is not – you know teachers are very tricky, someone can train the children on what they want. I have told you for instance I have taught English for seven years. Even if you give me two



days to train children, I can be able to know where to spot and most of the areas I spot on will also come. Now, if I spot something and you are just there and I say in the next 30 minutes arrange yourselves for an examination. Someone is not prepared but the 30 minutes psychologically prepares the mind – if I am going to do an examination, I need to be prepared. So we have the spot-on examinations.

- Then we also have external examinations. We do not always want to rely on ourselves. We do beginning of term, mid-term and end of term. **OKKK**

For all these categories of exams, what makes you understand that this one has passed and this one has failed, do you have specific standards of evaluating pupils' performance levels??

- One, before we get there even, these examinations, the purpose of these examinations is to measure the understanding of the learner. Now, as you are trying to measure, when you are making what we call self-evaluations, we base on these evaluations. Like for instance homework, when you send children home with work and they come in the morning and you find a number that has challenged the whole class, it tells you that that concept was not got. But in these other examinations, or even if it were an exercise and you give all passes, you can think maybe they have understood.
- But in the examinations we have a pass mark which we agree upon as a school and a pass mark and the pass marks are at different classes. For instance, in the lower primary, we put the pass mark at 50. A child who makes 50% has clearly passed. He is teachable. Then in upper primary, it is 60%.

Now, are these pass marks related to the National Grading Criteria??

- Aaah, the national grading criteria is not really – they may be related, but the National Grading Criteria may not be consistent. For instance, the other year 2015 (request not to record). Changes according to how pupils have performed. But a child who gets 50% has understood half of what you have taught. If a child gets 50, he is teachable
- The one of 60–70 is ok.

If you look at the practice generally, do you feel teachers are contributing/taking part in setting standards?



- There is supervision to ensure effective teaching. So in the supervision, for instance when children come from home, we normally see the grades are low. Beginning of term, the grades are average. But when teachers get on and start teaching, you see there is an improvement. And as compared to our other competitors around here in the Municipality where by as you go around the schools and ask, someone will tell you we have 6000 children and we have 12 teachers and you find for instance for the years we have been sitting mock, for the rest of the years, there is no school in this municipality that has beaten us, for instance this particular year, we had 90% first grade pass. That was not good for us. The second school, which is also private had 54%. The 3rd school which was government, had 40% and the remaining schools had 25, 20 etc and when you go to those schools and you go to ask, you will find the staff ceiling, the number of teacher: pupil ratio is very high compared to ours here, where you are given only 40-45 and a teacher is meant to handle only 45 or 40. And in this, a teacher is able to know who has not done corrections, will know who has not written well.
- And I think the teachers' importance is very vital and the more time the teacher will give to children, the better grades and quality of education. Coz partly, or not, what the pupil produces is the teachers' effort. Because much of these children come from home when they have not realised the future. It is the teacher who shows the child where to go. The future is determined by what the teacher imparts in this child.

5. So, are you emphasising the thinking that teachers' understanding of the subject matter and their actual classroom practices are likely to significantly affect the quality of education that pupils are getting

- The output comes out of the input heehhee... **okk!** What someone has in the brain is what you put out. I may say this statement out: You can't give what you do not have. **Sure, sure** So, I have a feeling, irrespective of all the good methods we use in teaching, individual brilliance and understanding of the content on the content you are going to teach contributes greatly to what the learners are going to learn. **OKK**, because, if I handled a structure unless seven years ago and it challenged me in a this way before a certain group of students and if this time I am going to handle it, I will look for a way that this time it is understood than the other ones and I won't fall in the same pit again. And if my understanding on that content is low, it means I will give less, I will not reach where I know I will not know what explain because when you stand in front of



children and you have nothing to deliver ... so the teachers' understanding in the quality education is very relevant.

And would you believe that teachers' understanding of quality is very much in line with the MOES standards??

research, the more I understand. So should you find someone who passed through such a shoddy way he comes to the field and does not put any effort in research, that person is likely to deliver something that is less qualitative. **Probably you would also love to relate your teaching methodologies with the environment surrounding us!** Which I think has a very great impact because we see children who come from well-to do families where the mother can be able to read the newspapers, watch television at home, when he comes to class, he beats his counterpart who comes from poor to do families where he always sees dad coming back home drunk and things are not always the best.

6. **Ahh, lets now look at a different aspect, still related to quality – An idea of accountability. In the teaching practice, how would you relate the teaching profession with providing/or accounting for teachers' actions in the classroom? In other words, can we say that you conduct in class, probably and the outputs you generate, are they reflecting an element of accountability?**

My conduct, my actions, Yes

How does the school management look at a teacher who has produced 00 D1s and the other one who has got 100% in division one?

- The perception are based on like two things. One; the one who gets 00, may be had a wrong understanding of what he is handling. That is no 1 because this person may be teaching but does not know where to tap. He does not know where to tap to get what he wants. And, secondly, we cannot judge education wholesomely basing on passing learners like at once. Because this is something where you find for instance someone sets a paper and the paper is not friendly to the learners, but the learners are well taught but unfortunately when the results come out, we only base on the results that are out not the nature of the work that the children did but, but Thirdly, the nature of the work that the children did, the teacher's effort and conduct in this and the results in most cases, the three have a close relationship. (The nature of the paper, the effort and the conduct of the teacher and the results could have a strong relationship in that the more effort you



put in, and how you conduct business/yourself and what you get out, will have a close relationship). I want to believe that if someone has handled the content well, irrespective of how hard the paper would be, you would not register zero D1s.

7. Given the circumstances around what is it you feel can be done to enhance the quality of education in this school?

In this school particularly?? **Yah, in this school particularly!**

Aaah, one, I do not want us to believe that quality education is only and only when all candidates get D1. And secondly, on top of after having known that we can still have 80% and call it quality education. Because for the 20% that have remained, we do not know where they have ended. If they have not ended in unqualified grades, they have second and third grades which is acceptable. We would say still there is quality education. So what can be done to maintain the quality education;

- One, there is need to provide enough instructional materials – enough instructional materials ahhh because for instance you find you are going to teach a dialogue and you need photocopies of such a dialogue and at the end of the day you find you have like four to five text books. That means that you have to put the 45 candidates that you have in 9 groups, nine pupils to be on one for each to have a copy which will make these children lose interest in learning is not intact to have a time lag. And which requires you also as teacher to use a lot of supervisory skills coz the 9 groups that you have formed cannot be effective to each one of them. So there is need to provide enough instructional materials.
- We also need to aaa harmonise the teaching methods. **Okkk.** For instance, now, these methods that I have given you, are basically used by me, someone can chose to use other methods and you find that some other methods are teacher centred some other methods are child centred and me personally I may not know them. So that means I need to harmonise, say for instance if we are teaching this, let's all use this and which is quite difficult.
- Then there is also need to have refresher courses. The more time you take without going back to read, the more things will change. For us when we were in school, they taught us the place where we buy meat is called a butchery, but shall you go to class now and



tell it to learners, it is irrelevant. And the moment you look irrelevant in front of the class, it means you are giving irrelevant information. And information passed on is information taken and spread. So, there is need to have refresher courses. And,

- Besides having refresher courses, the other way on how we can improve quality education is to look into our promotional measures. Standards have been deteriorating, how do we promote them, because for aaah, for instance now if you are promoting a candidate who has 50%, and now you are promoting them for instance from P.4, (because I have told you they vary, 50% and 60%) now if you have promoted them at 50% and it requires a teacher who is there to get 60%, where does he get the 10%?? Pass on what you know is there. Pass on the burton that is fully there because if you have reached 50 you are putting me to get back to 50 to push it up to 100. The journey is bigger than done ... you have taught from P.1 up to P4, the promotion is 50 % and now you are sending me someone with 50 % but it means the quality we shall get will still be 50. So it means the promotional measures... and we remove these strings. Say this one, if we have said 50, let it be 50 throughout. And the quality education you are focusing a will not come out, the way you want it. That is how I can view it.

8. Finally, given the education system in Uganda, what do you feel the government can do to generally enhance the quality of education in our primary schools?

- The government needs to enrol more teachers, because the available number compared to the number of pupils, there is need to enrol more teachers.
- Increase teachers' pay. Nowadays teachers are paid 400,000–500,000 UGX, which I think is not a fair motivation.
- Then besides, the government also needs to supervise what is on the ground. Supervision should not come right at P.7 when we are waiting for results. There should be timely supervision. Ongoing, by inspectors, which is not well being done.
- Need to reduce on the years of having thematic education. Let at P.4, For example at thematic level from Nursery to P.4, it should be examined. Actually, in the education system, the primary level is the one which has the longest time of 10 years. And for the



10 years, a child is learning and you tell this person to summarise the ten years in TWO hours. The work is too much. So if the work can be put into levels, and reduce on the years. The government needs to put in place enough infrastructure. Because you find children are learning under the trees. The other time I was watching news and the headmaster has a mobile office. He goes with the shade of the tree.

- We also need more instructional materials because these one help learning besides what cannot be explained.

- Also the need to have quality people enrolled. Education levels enrolled to should be qualitative, because initially, people who would go to colleges would be people who had failed. So this time there is need to focus much on that. Such that people who are coming out of colleges are qualitative and quality.

- We need to have all the subjects taught examined. For example, students start learning in Swahili and the government emphasises teaching Swahili. Even when teachers are in colleges they are learning Swahili but it is not examined. R.E we teach in school for ten years, they only ask 25 numbers. So if we would have everything examined, at every level, everything would be better.



APPENDIX X: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION FOR HEADTEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

ID: H3

General Information

- **School category:** Government Urban
- **For how long have you been a head teacher?** 23 Years
- **For how long have you been at this school?** 17 Years
- **How many teachers are there at this school?** 17 (By establishment, they should be 21)
- **How many pupils?** 985 (700 in Boarding Section)
- **What is your highest level of education?** Master's in Education

Study specific questions

1. Let us now move on to the focus of the study: As a head teacher who has been in this field for some good years, Mhh! What is your understanding of quality education?

- Quality education – The pinnacle of why institutions are established is performance; academic performance. These other core values, they come in to supplement the other one. That is even our mission here is to produce citizens of high integrity and academic excellence. So, by performing very well, it determines others, they come in as subsidiaries, but we focus on academic performance.

You have talked about citizens, it has captured my interest; so are we looking at quality of education producing a well, responsible citizen?

- In fact, the kind of education we give or offer, is comprehensive – all inclusive. It concerns the academic, the sole and even the psychomotor domain – the hand that you touch on such that when they have finished this level of education and graduated to other levels, then they are able to live a kind of life which is sustainable and contribute to the Millennium Development Goals.

2. When you look at the trend of education in Uganda, what would be your comment regarding primary education?



Primary education, much as we are all focusing at producing self-reliant citizens, still basically premised on theory rather than practical. When you see even the type of assessment we give – just theory. It is theoretical rather than practical. So I am advocating that if we could adopt continuous assessment and even involve these other co-curricular activities; we give assessment on these other aspects of education like hand work. In fact, we are also advocating for handwork. **Mhhh, I remember we used to have hand work when I was in primary school!** Ahaaa, even here we have a project on Conservation Effort for Community Development (CECOD); where we have this education for sustainable development. We use the resources within our environment to sustainably. So, am also giving my input that when we are carrying out assessment at the end of P.7, that element should also be considered, not only in the cognitive aspects but also on these other aspects such that when the pupils comes out, he is able to utilise whatever resources available to earn a living. **Ok!**

3. Given the Ugandan environment in the education sector, are you aware of any policies that talk about quality education or the processes of generating quality education?

- Those documents, especially the ones that are statutory – the Education Policy Review Commission – that one of Professor Senteza Kajubi of 1989, later in 1992 it was changed to the Education White Paper. It was talking about the relevance of education – to make it relevant to the learners, then it was also talking about the education system, especially the levels from P.1 to P.7, then another year to cater for those practical aspects of education.
- Then even now they have legalised nursery education for pre-primary/early child development programmes so that by the time they join this formal education, they are aware. They learn even other social skills.

And do you have specific policies here in this school that are aimed at improving the quality of education – particularly in this school?

- Now that we have a boarding section, all girls must be mentored in that field of domestic chores, like we have matrons who train them in kitchen chores. They are the ones who peel matooke we eat, they are the ones who pound the millet that we enjoy – because we take this local millet porridge. So they are the ones who do that one. Even the boys participate; we have demonstration gardens. So it's our policy, every class must



participate in that. They have their plots, we have a variety of crops that we promote – we grow. And at the end of the day, we enjoy because it also constitutes our meals.

- Then in decision making. We also involve students there. We have what we call a Co-pupils Parliament **Ohhh, ok!** and we move up to a national level. That's why I was telling you that I was the best in the country for three consecutive years. We sit down and debate on issues pertaining the school, they even give contributions to what should be done and we pick their ideas and discuss and at the end of the day you find that their contributions have in fact dominated whatever work plans and strategic plan we have in the school.
- Then we have also suggestion boxes where they put in their suggestions, questions then we also respond to those issues that are critical and contentious.

4. Let's us now look at the classroom environment and the actual process of generating quality education. What teaching methodologies do your teachers employ here in training the young ones – are you aware of those methodologies?

- Yes. The first one in fact, we have is cooperative learning where everybody, every student in class has a role to play. Even the tasks are distributed among members, they even have those leadership qualities or skills, so whatever learning is in class, all pupils are involved. **Ok!** So, it even calls for slow learners being helped by quick learners and you find that at the end of the day, every aspect of learning is handled by every pupil in that class. That one is what we call cooperative learning.
- We also have child to child. That one child-to-child the old ones help the young ones. Like even those ones in P.6 go down to P.1, P.2. In matters of social interactions, they are the ones who teach them toilet habits, how to take care of the environment; so that is what we call child to child learning.
- In general, we also have School Family Initiative (SFI): That one, remember being a boarding and having children of tender age, we even fail to have that element of parental care. It is being catered for by teachers here. The headmaster serves as the grandfather and other pupils right away from baby to P.7, they are given families under the family teacher. **Ok!** Mhhh, the head of that family is called a family teacher or family head. All those under him, whatever takes place at home is the same thing that takes place here. **Ok!** so what we miss at home, we get it from here. So that is what we call SFI and it has



also helped us to curb indiscipline, cater for gender issues, and sincerely, it has helped us. **Ok, good, good!**

5. Let's look at another area now; Assessment: How is the assessment of pupils done in this school?

So, assessment; it has three sections:

- One, continuous assessment, formative and summative assessment which is done at the end of the term and even at the end of the year. When pupils report, they just go to class for some weeks, then we subject them to a certain test, to test them on what they have covered in the area of study. Then they are subjected to another one in the middle of the term, so at the end of the term, they do end of term final exams. So those are three gazetted exams including even these home works and what but we consider these three and make an average of what one has scored. Even if a pupil fails to sit for an exam at the end of the year, we still refer to the performance gradually.

And with these form of assessments, is there a standard that you can employ to probably say; this one has failed, this one has passed?

- Ok, in the nursery section, for them they are not subjected to academic work. We consider the social skills, ability to communicate, ability to use these toilets and whatever, to identify and associate objects.
- Then the middle levels (P.1–P.4) we do exams then we put there a certain pass mark and but we consider the general performance in the whole class, then we see the reliability and validity of the tests administered. So it is from that one that we decide over the number of pupils that should be promoted. We don't say repeat. We advise and we premise all those on certain competences: numeracy and literacy. And when we are teaching in those classes, that is why it is called the thematic curriculum, based on themes, covering certain themes, then when we are testing or assessing, we consider those themes – the mastery of those themes. And those pupils who will not have mastered those competences in certain themes, they are made or subjected to remedial teaching so that they master them.
- Then level 5 and above, we give them grades – aggregates. Each discipline that is assessed they are graded according to aggregates; Distinction 1, 2 credit 3, like that. Then we put a certain measure. Then when one qualifies above that one, then he is the one we promote. **Good!**



Is that measure, the one determined by the Ministry of Education and Sports or you people here come out with your own standard?

- This is determined by the Ministry of Education and Sports but we also put there some ingredients. You cannot deviate from the government policy but we put there some ingredients. That's why we are ranked the best, because of those ingredients. **Ok!**

6. Given your experience in the teaching/education sector, do you feel teachers or head teacher even participate in the process of setting such standards?

- Yes. Now, the approach should be bottom-up approach – the teachers should be involved in setting these standards or policies because they are the implementers – they are the field commanders. So when they are involved right from the start, it means during the course of implementation, they will be sorely involved and at the end of the assessment period, they will be put to blame or given rewards because they will have achieved what they planned at the beginning. So it should be bottom-up approach. Teachers should be involved in all these stages of academic programmes.

Ok, ohhh, but is that really what is happening exactly or you are talking about the ideal?

- It should be like that, not what is taking place, because for us we just get policies designed by people we do not know then for us we implement. **But as you have mentioned, it would be interesting for the head teachers and teachers to participate!**
Yes.

7. When you look at whatever takes place in the school environment, especially regarding academic performance and the generation of quality education, do you find a position-do you believe that teachers' understanding and their classroom practices will affect the quality of the output we get?

- Yes, because even when we are carrying out assessment like mock, before a teacher is allowed to participate in mock setting and marking, they are subjected to doing tests of a dummy paper and you find a pupil/candidate has scored 100 but the teacher to mark that work has scored 50%. And therefore, the understanding of a teacher may greatly affect the performance of the child because you cannot transform unless yourself you have a mechanism of transformation. So they should really know the subject matter, the



concepts, whatever, before they go to class to teach. **Ok!** and that is why there is need for refresher courses to these teachers to be updated **ok.**

8. And, this is now a general one, at a national level: How do schools account for whatever they do – say, academic wise, say financially, say morally, how do you account for the actions that take place here? And to whom do you again account to?

- In terms of all parents and other stakeholders, then at the end of the year, you have to account to the parents – the ones who are the owners of the children by holding parents' days. Like ours here, we had it on the 22 October was Parents Day. Pupils have a variety of items and present and the Guest of Honour was the Municipal Education Officer. That was accountability.
- Then accountability in terms of performance, teachers' way of teaching and pupils' learning, those ones are shown on the reports. For P.7, it is the results of Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).
- Then other resources like UPE finances and what, we have got what we call physical accountability. When we are entrusted with those resources – funds and what; we have a work plan – annual work plans. And each term has got its own specific activities and at the end of the year, you account what you have used those resources for. Like for us, we have built a three storeyed building. It is the only building – I mean, it's the only UPE school in the Bushenyi greater which has that building. Then we have another commercial building in Bushenyi town that is accommodating the bank. So that is physical accountability.
- Then these other accountabilities, we make financial reports, annual audit reports. We invite annual general meetings they come and look at us. Then we are being guided by these internal auditors and external auditors and we display how we have used the money like that (points at a chart showing the use of capacitation and school facilities grant).

9. As a head teacher who has been here for some time, what do you feel should be done or can be done to enhance the quality of education in this particular school?

- There is what we call staff development. Staff development, as a convention on academic, we can be meant to undergo further studies to improve on their understanding as we have been talking about competences.



- Then there is what we call motivation which is in form of materials and the salaries. You know most of the government servants these days are talking about the salaries. Salaries are not enough. Then that one can also, you know; when someone is motivated, it corresponds with the outputs, one does well. And these days when you look at payments or the emoluments for teachers, you find someone is getting 400,000 UGX and has a child who wishes to be at the university and the two do not harmonise. What he gets, cannot help him pay fees for the child at the university.
- Then, may be, we could begin with children's allowances. That one also can help. What else?

10. And for the government-what can the government do generally to improve on the current trend-the current nature of education in Uganda?

- So, on the side of the government, you know, at the beginning, we are just comparing school and yet we are not subjected to the same treatment. They should provide better and similar learning environment like classrooms. You find a school in the rural setting, it has no facilities and at the end of the end of the course, they are to sit the same exams, and there are certain new technologies that have been introduced like computers – ICT. Then other people in urban areas, they learn from televisions and whatever, others in the villages are denied those facilities. So, we should have that holistic treatment of schools. Then something can be improved on.
- Provision of teachers' quarters: teachers sleep outside the schools.