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A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE UGANDA LOWER SECONDARY  
SCHOOL CURRICULUM: REQUIREMENT FOR INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

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| Tiivistelmä/Abstract<br><p>Uganda has registered profound levels of primary and secondary school attendance since the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education in 2007. Introducing Universal Secondary Education made Uganda the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to introduce the compulsory secondary level education. While this policy has improved access, there has not been a corresponding increase in quality, and large numbers of children are still missing out on secondary education. This master thesis is analyzing inclusive education at the heart of the reformed lower secondary school curriculum. To reach this goal, the lower secondary school curriculum framework document and two interviews from people familiar with the reform process serves as the data for the analysis.</p> <p>The research is a qualitative study and the data was analyzed using content analysis approach. The theoretical framework consists of theories of inclusive education and aims of Education for All global movement (EFA) as well as Sustainable Development Goal 4. The Uganda lower secondary school framework document is analyzed visa-vis the aims of EFA and SDG 4.</p> <p>The main categories that emerged from the data concerning inclusive education were: Participation as a requirement addressing diversity; inclusive, alternative ways of learning for all; inclusive and safe learning environment; teaching material addressing diversity without stereotypes; and assessment addressing all learners and their achievement.</p> <p>There were also topics that were missing from the data, such as, specific discussions about people or groups that might be in danger of exclusion or concrete methods or pedagogy of including everyone.</p> |   |                                |  |
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### **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Hajjat Joweria Nabakka, whose strength and character has been a source of inspiration.

## List of Abbreviations

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| AFDB   | African Development Bank                                       |
| DFID   | Department for International Development                       |
| EFA    | Education For All  |
| ERC    | Education Review Commission                                    |
| ESIP   | Education Strategic Investment Plan                            |
| ESSP   | Education Sector Strategic Plan                                |
| FAO    | Food and Agricultural Organization                             |
| GOU    | Government of Uganda   |
| GWP    | Government White Paper   |
| HESFB  | Higher Education Student's Financing Board                     |
| MoESTS | Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports          |
| MOES   | Ministry of Education and Sports                               |
| OHCHR  | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights               |
| SDGs   | Sustainable Development Goals                                  |
| SEIA   | Secondary Education and Training in Africa                     |
| UBOS   | Uganda Bureau of Statistics                                    |
| UN     | United Nations   |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Program                             |
| UNESCO | United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Emergency Fund                       |

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

"We are at a time in our country's history that inclusive language is better than exclusive language." Barack Obama.

The need of inclusion encapsulated by this piece of wisdom is a fitting start for my research. My research looks at whether the measures put in the new lower secondary curriculum framework cater for the needs of all learners (whatever their stratum) that need to be included in the lower secondary reformed curriculum. Inclusion in this research is restricted to how it is addressed in the lower curriculum framework. The lower secondary curriculum framework is a proposal for a reformed lower secondary school curriculum envisaged by the government of Uganda. The purpose of the lower secondary Curriculum Framework is to inform all stakeholders in the education system, and members of the public, about the philosophy, aims and expected outcomes of the lower secondary school curriculum. The Framework addresses the levels of schooling from Senior 1 to senior 4. Secondary education in Uganda is six years and so lower secondary school covered by this curriculum framework is senior 1 to senior 4.

The introduction of Universal Primary Education in Uganda in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education in 2007, increased attendance levels tremendously. However, while access has improved, there has not been a corresponding increase in quality and large numbers of children are still missing out of school, especially on secondary education. Education as pointed out by the constitution of Uganda and other local, regional and international legal instruments is a right. This is why education that takes everybody on board is needed: Multitudes of people, for example, people with physical disabilities, hard to reach areas, rural areas, ethnic minorities, those still recovering from the effects of wars, girls, boys, who are not included in any form of education, be it formal or informal. Uganda is a signatory to a number of international and regional instruments that call for equality in all spheres of life, including education and is bound to adhere to the standards laid down in those documents. It ratified the Convention against Discrimination in Education on the 9, September, 1968. It signed the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities on 30, March, 2007. It also signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 30, July, 1980 and 22, July, 1985, respectively (University of Manitoba, 2008, "Ratification of International Human Rights Treaties/Uganda"). Uganda is as well a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education

(1994), an often quoted key document on inclusive education. To meet those commitments the Uganda government has put in place instruments that demand for access, equity and quality as regards educational services for all learners, including persons with special learning needs. The government also put in place a department responsible for special needs and inclusive education, whose mission is to coordinate and support the provision of special needs and inclusive education services to meet the educational needs and rights of learners with special learning needs. According to the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports (MOESTS, 2016, “Educational Provisions and Approaches in special needs and inclusive education”, para.2), the government claims that the current approach of inclusive education focuses beyond both the traditional and the transitional practices of special education and integration respectively. The present trend of inclusive education and policy thrust embraces modifications in curricular, teaching methods, teaching/learning resources, medium of communication and adjusting the learning environment to meet individual learning needs.

The focus of this thesis is the education of the many groups of people who are still excluded from education and the goal is to inquire into the different measures the government of Uganda is putting in place to mitigate the problem of educational exclusion which is still part of the fabric of Uganda society.

### **1.1 Research aim and its justification**

The focus of this study is inclusive education as it is presented in the lower secondary curriculum framework. The reasons why I chose to write about inclusive education is rooted in my early working in education in two different settings in Uganda. One of the places I spent time doing part time teaching is called Kiboga district, a rural place in Central Uganda. The time I spent there brought me in contact with students who were against odds coming often to attend schooling. I also saw many others who were not attending at all. Then after my graduation, I found work as a librarian at a ‘giant’ government school in the capital of Uganda. The ‘giant’ schools in Uganda, traditionally, are those schools that perform better than others in national examinations. This school in contrast to the one I taught at earlier would be a wish for any student. It is a world of difference (in terms of everything) with the other school. Aside from working as a librarian, I also took part in other extracurricular

activities at the school and saw how the emphasis on grades more than any other assessment was putting unnecessary pressure on students.

These two experiences at both the rural and urban school heightened my interest in education and its various aspects. As far as the issue of inclusion is concerned, I saw exclusionary practices in all places. So as I was pondering on what to write about, inclusive education came to the fore. There is need to make society more inclusive and education and the contextual subject of inclusion is one of them. This thesis is significant for two reasons: First, there is a possibility that since this curriculum is yet to be implemented not much thesis has been written about it. Writing on the new lower curriculum reform process should contribute in a small way to the debate of education reform in Uganda. The study will also cast light on some issues which could have been omitted from the lower secondary curriculum framework document and inform micro implementation efforts. This should provide designers of future framework documents an overview of areas that needed to be considered.

Basing on the focus of my study, the central research question is: How does the new lower secondary school curriculum address the issue of inclusion of the different categories of students in Uganda?

## **1.2 Thesis structure**

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. In chapter 1, I have stated the basis of my research, together with the purpose of conducting this research. I also present the research question that I formulated.

Chapters two, three and four provide some background of Uganda providing an understanding of its context. In addition I describe the situation of diversity in some spheres of Ugandan society, its past and present education, curriculum reforms and challenges across these spheres.

Chapter five focuses on inclusive education, which is the theoretical framework of this research. I present the different understandings of the concept. I discuss inclusive education vis-à-vis integration and segregation.

Chapter six introduces inclusive education in the context of Education For All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

In chapter seven, I provide a brief description of some Ugandan educational policies relating to education, including inclusive education that will be referred to in the findings.

Chapter eight introduces my methodology, research method and data collection methods. I provide an overview of qualitative research and why I chose this methodology.

Chapter nine presents my findings from the data analysis. In chapter ten, I provide a discussion of the findings and draw conclusions from them and also provide suggestions for further research.

## **2 BACKGROUND OF UGANDA**

This chapter serves to introduce the country which is the focus of the study and the background information provided (not least the past education), helps to understand and interpret inclusive education in Uganda.

### **2.1 Geographic description**

Uganda, almost the size of the United Kingdom, is located in East-Central Africa. It is a landlocked country of approximately 241,550 square kilometers. It is bordered on the west by Congo, on the north by South Sudan, on the east by Kenya, and on the south by Tanzania and Rwanda.

Uganda's climate is tropical; generally rainy with two dry seasons (December to February, June to August); semiarid in northeast (CIA World Factbook, 2016, "Geography").

Uganda has one of the world's biggest lakes, Lake Victoria, which contains many islands. This heavily influences the climate of Southern Uganda. It prevents temperatures from varying significantly and increases cloudiness and rainfall. Most major cities are located in the south, near Lake Victoria, including the capital Kampala and the nearby city of Entebbe (Wikibooks, 2015, para.5). Although Uganda is landlocked, it has many other lakes besides Lake Victoria.



## **2.2 Administrative divisions**

Uganda is a republic with a decentralized system of administration, introduced in 1997. The dissemination of power from the central government to several local governments and administrative units is enshrined by the 1995 Uganda constitution. The 1997 Local Governments Act, which is the main legislation for local governments, describes the framework of decentralization. The main objective of Uganda's decentralization policy was the need to return power to the local people through democratization, participation, accountability, and efficient delivery of basic services. Under decentralization, there are several types of local governments, but only the districts and sub counties have both political authority and significant resources (Azfar, Kahkonen and Meagher, 2000, p.9).

The district according to the 1995 Uganda constitution, is the basic unit of local government and is responsible for some functions and delivery of basic services, including education. Uganda is divided into 111 districts, and the capital city, Kampala, is located in the Southern part of the country.

## **2.3 Diversity in Uganda**

According to the 5th post-independence census conducted by Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Uganda has a population of 34,856,813, people of which 16,935,456 are male and 17,921,357 females (UBOS, 2014, "Selected Socio Economic indicators").

Uganda is made up of different ethnic groups, who speak various local languages and belong to different religious denominations. The many ethnic groups make Uganda one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the region. The more than forty distinct societies that make up Uganda are usually classified according to linguistic similarities. Most Ugandans speak Nilo-Saharan, Central Sudanic languages or Bantu languages. The Nilo-Saharan languages, which are farther classified into other strands, are mostly spoken by people in the North and East of the country. Central-Sudanic languages, which arrived in Uganda from farther north over the centuries, are spoken mostly in the northwestern part of the country (Byrnes, 1990, "Ethnic Diversity and Language", para.2). Bantu languages, which are part of the larger CongoKordofanian grouping are spoken mostly by people in the Southeast, Southwest and Western parts of the Country. Bantu people are the majority and include the Baganda, who make up 17% of the population, the Basoga (8.4%), Banyankole (9.5%), Bakiga (6.9%),

Bagwere (4%), Banyoro (3%), Batooro (3%), Bahima (2%), Bafumbira (6%), and other much smaller ethnic groups. The Nilotic people, mainly in the north and northeast, are the second largest and include the Langi, 6.1%, the Acholi, 4.7%, in the north. The Iteso live in the northeast and make up 6.4% of the country's population. The Karamojong who make up 2% of Uganda's population, occupy the considerably drier, largely pastoral territory in the northeast. The northwest of Uganda is where most people who speak Central Sudanic languages are found and they are mostly, the Lugbara and Madi, who are the largest of this group making up roughly 4.2 % and 1.2% respectively. Europeans, Asians, and Arabs constitute 1% of the population. And there are other smaller groups who are equally an integral part of Uganda (Mwakikagile, 2012, p.12-13).

Despite this image of North-South divide in Uganda, the constitution of the country grants everyone the right to live anywhere within the boundaries of Uganda, and many Ugandans live among people who speak other languages. English is a major language introduced in the country by the British, in the late nineteenth century as a language of colonial administration. After independence from Britain in 1962, it became the official language of Uganda. It is used in government, commerce, used as the primary medium of instruction in education, used as a medium of communication in courts of law, it is often used by some radio and television broadcasts, official publications and the major newspapers appear in English. Most Ugandans speak at least one local language from the many local languages spoken in country. Swahili and Arabic are also widely spoken (Byrnes, 1990, "Ethnic Diversity and Language ", para.3, 6). Swahili, a language that is widely spoken across the great lakes region was approved by the constitution (Amendment act 2005) as the second official language. It is believed this will be advantageous in fast-tracking regional integration.

According to government data obtained by the United States Department of State, Christians make up 85 percent of the Uganda population, 12 percent are Muslims, and 3 percent belong to other religious beliefs such as, Hindu, Jewish, Bahai, or adherents of indigenous beliefs. Among Christians, 42 percent are Roman Catholics, 36 percent Anglicans, 15 percent Pentecostal or Orthodox Christians, and 7 percent members of other Protestant denominations. The Muslim population is primarily Sunni. Indigenous religious groups practice their own beliefs mostly in rural areas. Nationals of Indian origin or their descents are the most significant non-African ethnic population and are primarily Shia Muslim or Hindu (United States Department of State, 2014, p.1).

## **2.4 The present economic, social and political situation**

Uganda is a developing country with considerable natural resources; including, fertile soils, regular rainfall, small deposits of copper, gold and other minerals and recently discovered oil (CIA World FactBook, 2016 “Geography”). By the end of 2015, Uganda’s Growth Domestic Product (GDP) was US\$ 27 billion (Global Business, 2015, “Gross Domestic Product – GDP”). But the risks to Uganda’s economic prospects are significant and mainly relate to poor performance in the area of domestic revenue mobilization; and the uncertainty regarding the date of commencement of oil production and the subsequent flow of revenues. Beyond these risks, Uganda’s growth and development is constrained by the low levels of productivity of both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors; inappropriate urban development; the slow development of infrastructure; and the limited availability of credit. (World Bank, 2015, “Development Challenges”, para.3).

Recent figures reveal a mixed human development outlook in Uganda. The World Bank claims Uganda has surpassed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target on halving poverty by 2015, and made significant progress in reducing the population that suffers from hunger, promoting gender equality and empowering women (World Bank, 2015, “Development Challenges”, para.3). The 2012/13 National Household Survey (UNHS), from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) indicates absolute poverty has continued to fall, from 24.5% in 2009/10 to 22.2% in 2012/13, consolidating gains made in this sphere over the past two decades. However, progress has stalled and in some cases reversed in the areas of education, health and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. The situation is particularly worrying in relation to HIV/AIDS and maternal health. Regarding the former, HIV prevalence rates (ages 15-49) have increased from 6.4% to 7.3% between 2005/06 and 2011, a rise largely attributed to an increase in high-risk sexual activities. Progress in reducing maternal mortality has stalled, with the latest figures putting Uganda’s maternal mortality rate at 438 deaths per 100000 live births in 2011 (AFDB, 2014, p.2).

Uganda registered mixed results in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The 2013 national MDG progress report indicates that only MDG 4 (reducing child mortality), MDG 6B (universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment) and MDG 6C (reversing the incidence of malaria and other major diseases) were on track to be achieved by 2015. Progress in achieving other MDGs, however, was said to be slow, as is the case for MDG 2 and MDG 5 (achieving universal primary education and improving maternal health, respectively) or experienced a

reversal, as is the case of reversing the incidence of HIV/AIDS (MDG 6A). In education, figures for 2012/13 indicate a decrease in national literacy rates from 73% to 71% between 2009/10 and 2012/13. Reasons for the poor performance are mainly attributed to challenges in the recruitment of teachers. Net primary enrolment rates have dropped from 86% in 2002/3 to 82% in 2012/13, although these trends are heavily influenced by the situation in the Karamoja region (a region in northeastern Uganda), which reported a primary net enrolment rate of only 57%. The proportion of children living within a 3km radius of a primary school has increased from 71.7% in 2005/6 to 77.1% in 2012/13, while 95% of schools currently have separate toilet facilities for boys and girls. The government has also increased the share of the budget apportioned to education, from 13.7% in 2010/11 to 14.9% in 2012/13 (AFDB, 2014, p.11).

Estimates from the 2012/13 household survey indicate a reduction in the incidence of poverty in Uganda, from 24.5% in 2009/10 to 22.2% in 2012/13. This follows two decades of continued progress in bringing down absolute poverty in the country and consolidates Uganda's achievement of MDG1, a goal reached in 2009/10. Unlike in previous surveys, though, poverty gains have been unevenly spread throughout the country. Poverty reduction has been limited to rural areas, with urban poverty increasing from 9.1% in 2009/10 to 10.5% in 2012/13. In addition, important regional disparities remain. Poverty incidence has fallen and quite significantly in parts of the country: from 9.7% to 5.2% in the central region and from 18.2% to 9.2% in western Uganda. But other regions have fared less well: Northern Uganda has seen poverty increase from 46.2% to 49%, while poverty incidence in the Eastern region has risen from 24.2% to 27.7% during the same period (AFDB, 2014, p.12).

## **2.5 Gender equality**

According to the 2013 Uganda MDG progress report, the country was on track of achieving goal 3 of promoting gender equality and empowering women. That reflected reductions in gender disparities at all levels of education affecting all levels of instruction. Improvements are particularly noteworthy in primary education where, as of 2009, gender parity has been effectively achieved, with the ratio of girls to boys remaining at 99.9% since then. Progress has also been strong when it comes to political representation, with 35% of members of parliament being women, one of the highest shares in the world.

However, there are still important gender disparities in the economic and social spheres. Women spend around 10% fewer hours than men on economic activities, and their work is heavily concentrated in low value work in agriculture, forestry and fishing. Moreover, as heads of households their earnings are 27.5% lower than men, according to the 2012/13 household survey. At the same time, women are still responsible for the majority of time consuming activities in the household, spending on average 35 hours a week on household chores, as opposed to only 22 hours in the case of men (AFDB, 2014, p.11-12).

Politically, Uganda is broadly peaceful, albeit in a fragile political situation. Uganda held presidential and parliamentary elections on the 18th, February 2016. The incumbent President, standing on the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party ticket was re-elected in a controversial election for another five-year term. Uganda has 418 members of parliament, with a number of seats reserved for women. The people with disabilities are also represented.

### **3 EDUCATION IN UGANDA**

In this research about the reformed curriculum it is of vital importance to understand the education system in Uganda. The discussion starts with a brief historical background of education before independence and after independence and the attempt at reforms during this period, describing the institutions running education and some successes and challenges the education system is facing. The purpose of providing a brief historic picture is to get an idea of one of the root causes of educational exclusion in Uganda. The purpose is also to provide a clear picture of the current context in which the government is trying to provide or make education inclusive. Before concentrating on inclusive education, it is important to have a clear understanding of the whole educational context.

#### **3.1 Education before independence**

Formal education was introduced in Uganda in the 1880s, with the coming of the Christian missionaries. The start of colonization and with it, western civilization and formal education in a way unraveled the former social setup and way of life in Uganda. Before this, communities had a system of non-formal education - indigenous or traditional forms of education through which children were groomed into socially acceptable and responsible adults (Ogwang, 2012, para.1). The aim of the non-formal education in place before formal education came was:

- a) To mould children to fit into their respective societies.
- b) To promote harmony in the societies.
- c) To enable the youths to solve individual and societal problems.
- d) To equip the youths with production skills.
- e) To promote cultural heritage.
- f) To develop character training and respect for elders among the youths.
- g) To enable the youths to acquire and apply life skills (Mutebi, 1996, p.2).

Through this, it was thought that children would become socially acceptable and responsible adults. In Uganda, like in most African countries, the first 'school' in life was the home. In this 'school', the knowledge and skills imparted to boys included, for example, training them how to hunt and gather food and girls were trained how to manage homes (Ogwang, 2012, para.1). This indigenous education had no formal institutions, like schools. There was no

formal curriculum. The curriculum was the sum total of the societal experiences with regard to culture, customs, beliefs and instructional methods were demonstrations, modelling, stories, folklore, songs, among others. When it came to evaluation, it was done through observation of an individual's performance in real situations in life, for example, through battles, production, marriages, civic duties and leadership (Mutebi, 1996, p.3).

The formal education introduced by missionaries greatly differed from non-formal education. The formal education introduced initially started with catechism classes, which served to entrench the colonialists' supremacy and interests to the detriment of Ugandan natives (Ogwang, 2012, para.2). One of the ways which these missionaries conceived to be most effective was to make sure that the converts could refresh their religious knowledge in their homes by reading the bible and other simple books. Between 1877 and 1879, the missionaries taught children and adults' religion, and soon expanded formal education with the introduction of reading, writing and arithmetic, with missionary houses and compounds serving as the initial formal schools (Mutebi, 1996, p.3). The education was geared at making converts literate and entrenching the foreigner's religious doctrines. The locals were able to read the bible, to write, to communicate and, later, gained technical education skills (Ogwang, 2012, para.2).

Between 1900 and 1924, the Missionaries established schools and taught children and adults with no, or little financial assistance from the Protectorate government. They designed their own school curriculum to suit their missionary purposes, set, marked and graded examinations and set the standards for each school grade, and administered the schools. Training of teachers was also the responsibility of the religious founding bodies. The system of education was highly selective and discriminative and could compare with the current situation, where the children of the rich go to the best schools. Industrial and agricultural education was preferred for African children to groom them into farmers to supply British industries with raw materials. Academic type of education was exclusively for Asian and European children (Ogwang, 2012, para.2). The few boarding schools which they set up in central Uganda, where they first set foot, were also attended mainly by children of chiefs and influential families who, it was assumed, would sooner or later hold positions of responsibility in the society (Mutebi, 1996, p.3). The curriculum consisted of religion, reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography, mathematics, music and games. It is said that the British designed the education this way because initially, the British Colonial Office feared that training Africans might create empty aspirations, like equating themselves to Europeans and

fighting for their entitlement as citizens, which Europeans never wanted to hear of (Ogwang, 2012, para.3).

The weakness with this education was that it was geared towards producing educated Catholics and Protestants, who progressively cherished Western culture more than Ugandan culture and not educated Ugandans who would become productive to the country. The type of education system promoted by the colonialists created a white-collar job mentality as it aimed at training low and middle-level manpower for the colonial administration (Mutebi, 1996, p.3; Ogwang, 2012, para.4). Despite its weakness in as far as contributing to the productivity of the country, this education brought a few benefits to some native people who attained it. These benefits included the enhanced economic and social status that was accorded to westernized, literate Africans, like getting clerical positions in the protectorate government. This led to the quick spread of Christian missionary schooling as the demand for European education grew among the indigenous people (Mino, 2011, p.59).

Although initially, the protectorate government did not support the missionaries' education of indigenous people because of fear that the Africans would use the knowledge they gained through schooling to rebel and rise up against the British, the colonial administration later reconsidered this policy, as it expanded its administration and economic activities. The government decided to use education as a tool to teach the indigenous population the necessary skills for working in the lower ranks of the colonial administration and enterprises. For example, the indigenous people could be used as railway builders to replace the relatively more expensive Indians, who the British had brought as railroad laborers from their colony in India. In 1925, in order to increase state control over education and also to coordinate and provide financial support to the church's educational activities, the government established the Department of Education (Mino, 2011, p.59-60).

While the government supported the missionaries' work, it also moved to change the focus of education provision, encouraging primary schools to emphasize technical training over literacy education and set up its own technical schools in order to serve its economic interests. Even though the colonial regime maintained close ties with the Christian missionary groups and encouraged the promotion of Christian values, it also worked to reduce religious groups' influence on education in order to avoid the resurgence of interreligious conflict that had broken out when they first came to Uganda. The missionaries nevertheless remained the foremost providers of European education to the indigenous people given that by 1960, out

of Uganda's 28 secondary schools, only 8 were run by the government, while 20 were run by missionaries. Earlier in 1940 the colonial government set up an education committee that reviewed Uganda's education system and made recommendations which eventually led to the adoption of policies that increased local control of education. A system of Board of Governors was established in order to promote local involvement in school administration, and local governments, with more indigenous participation in matters such as financing of primary education (Mino, 2011, p.60-61).

## **3.2 Education after independence**

### **3.2.1 New policies**

After gaining independence in 1962, the new Ugandan government set out to revamp the education system, including making changes to the school curriculum. The schooling at that time was racially divided with Europeans, Asians, and Africans attending separate institutions, and each group was also split into different religions. For example, among the Indian population there were the Hindus, Sikhs; the Christians also had different denominations, so had the Muslims. They had each created their own schools. The government had to devise measures of changing or reducing this. In 1963, the government appointed the Castle Education Commission to review the education system and consider how education in Uganda could be improved and adopted to the needs of Uganda. The policy recommendations and the structure of education created by the commission, had largely remained the same until the late 1980s, and it nationalized the school curriculum for the first time. In addition, in 1963 the government enacted an Education Act that placed all grant-aided schools under the control of the government to loosen the grip of racial and religious groups on education. Once under government control, the schools were prohibited from barring children, who were not of the same race or religion, from local areas to attend their school. Added to this were efforts to increase the staffing levels of indigenous people in schools and reduction of expatriate teachers (Mino, 2011, p.63-64).

Between 1962 and 1970, Uganda also underwent a period of expansion of access to education and the building of new and enlargement of existing primary schools. The number of secondary schools also increased tremendously. The Ugandan government established the

National Curriculum Development Center in 1973 to among other functions carry out curriculum reform, initiate new syllabuses, draft teaching schemes, in order to change the way students were taught in schools at all levels throughout the entire nation (Mino, 2011, p.64-65). The Centre was established and started its work when Uganda had started experiencing a period of turbulence. It therefore faced several operational constraints, such as, staffing and shortage of other resources (Mutebi, 1996, p.9). Even the other policies, for example, the Government Educational Plan designed between 1971/2-1975/6 aimed at increasing access to and reform of education was hardly implemented and most Ugandans did not gain access to education as they faced challenges in attending school in the midst of post-independence instability. This instability and conflict emanating from a continual struggle for control of the government hindered the expansion of education throughout Uganda (Syngelakis & Arudo, 2006, p.4; Mino, 2011, p.65).

In late 1980s after the current government had ushered in relative peace and stability in most parts of the country, it embarked on general recovery and rehabilitation of the country. Chief among the priorities in the fundamental changes the government promised, was to revamp the education system and thus address issues of access, equality and affordability. In July 1987, the government appointed a commission – the Education Review Commission (ERC), to review the education system. The setting up of this commission provided a foundation for the current curriculum reform process. The terms of reference of this commission (among others), included: reviewing the present education policy, appraising the current system, at all levels, reviewing the general aims and objectives of education, examining the structure of primary and secondary levels of education. From the report of the ERC, the government had to produce a white paper on education. When the ERC submitted its report in 1989, the Cabinet sat and considered the recommendations contained in the report. It gave its own views and recommendations and subsequently, in 1992 produced a Government White Paper (GWP) on education, which introduced significant changes to the ERC's original recommendations (Mutebi, 1996, p.17-19).

The government white paper on education was to guide the education reform program over the next 25 years-from 1992. The main emphasis in the white paper was on providing educational opportunities for all the country's children. The key issues arising from the ERC and the subsequent 1992 Government White Paper on Education provide the context to the current education reform program taking place in the country. The government white paper

on education set in motion a series of activities, for example, it provided the basis for discussions with major donors on the funding of reforms and improvements to the education system, the commitment to the universalization of primary schooling, curriculum reform, quality assurance mechanisms (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006, p.5, 31; Higgins & Rwanyange, 2005, p.11).

The 1992 Government White Paper on Education is, by and large, the basis of official policy on the purpose and programmes of education. While some of the programmes have been revised as a result of intervening events, the White Paper's articulation of the purposes of Uganda's education system continues to be the supreme guidance for the sector. The key policy idea in the educational sector for both rural and urban Uganda includes providing equitable access to quality and affordable education to all Ugandans, propelling the nation towards achieving the goals of poverty reduction, meeting commitments to achieve Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), providing relevant education and enhancing efficiency, and strengthening partnerships in the education sector. The current education policy focuses on expanding the functional capacity of educational structures and reducing on the inequalities of access to education between sexes, geographical areas, and social classes in Uganda (Syngellakis & Arudo, 2006, p.6). The educational reform process started in late 1980s is underpinned by the 1995 Uganda constitution which points out in chapter 4, article 30 that all persons have the right to education and the state is obligated to 'take appropriate measures to afford every citizen equal opportunity to attain the highest educational standard possible' (Uganda constitution, 1995).

### 3.2.2 Structure of the Uganda education system

Uganda offers both academic and technical education. The foundation for both types of education was laid by the Islamic and Christian Missionaries and later built upon by colonial and post-colonial administrations. The education system in Uganda consists of two to three years of nursery/pre-primary education (for those who attend it), seven years of primary education, four years of lower (ordinary) level secondary education, two years of upper (advanced) level secondary education, and three to five years of tertiary or university education. At the end of each of the first three levels of education (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary), students are supposed to take national exams that allow successful students to move to the next level while those who fail to meet the minimum grades are advised to repeat

the final year or drop out. Students who meet the minimum grades can opt for vocational education, tertiary colleges or university education after primary or secondary education leading to the award of certificates, diplomas or degrees. This is how the Uganda education system is structured.

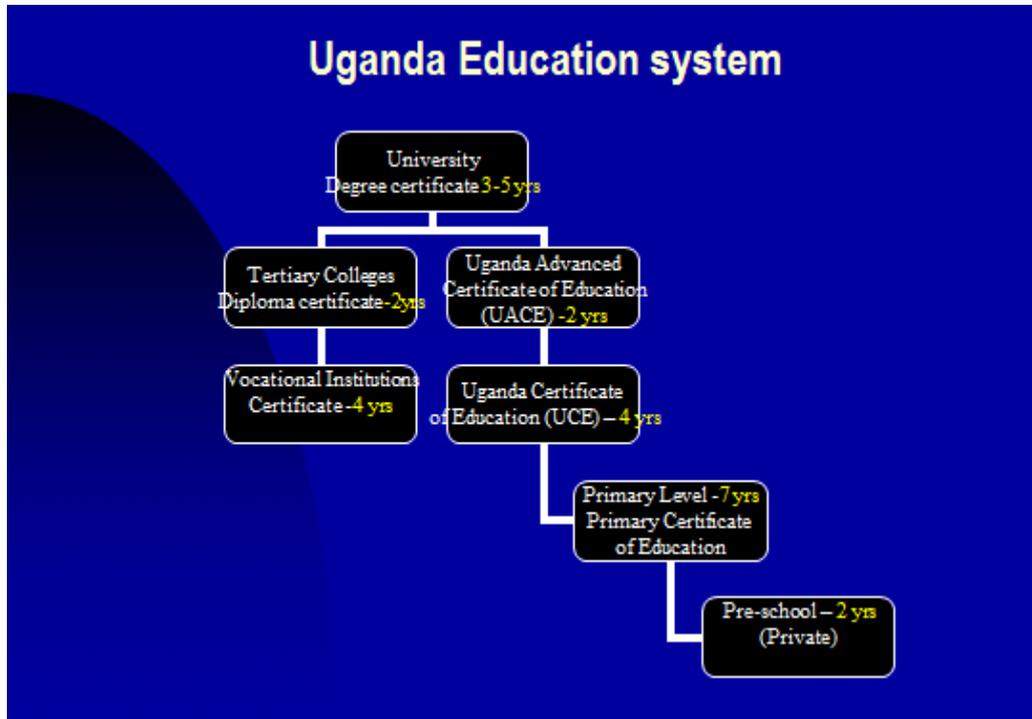


Fig. 2. Uganda Education System. Retrieved April 16, 2016, from <http://slideplayer.com/slide/7228867/>

Nursery/Kindergarten is the pre-school level of education in Uganda. Education at this level is basically in the hands of private agencies and individuals. The ministry of education developed an Early Childhood Development Policy in order to streamline the programme. The ministry therefore, licenses and monitors the private centers and avails instructional guidelines. Most of the nursery and kindergarten schools are situated in urban areas and many children enter primary school with little preparation for the intellectual tasks it requires (FAO & UNESCO, 2006, p.30). The trend of nursery schools being located mostly in urban areas is now changing and nursery schools are mushrooming in rural areas as well. Nursery education usually takes two or three years, from lower/baby class to top class.

With normal annual progression, Primary education consists of seven years of schooling. This is the level of education that most pupils who do not attend nursery begin at. The official age of starting school is 6 (Moyi, 2013, p.3). Students who manage to complete the seven

years sit for the primary leaving examination, administered by the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB). Currently, there are four examinable subjects - English language, mathematics, science and social studies. Successful candidates are then admitted into four year secondary schools (lower secondary) or technical schools.

In 1997, the Uganda government with the need to increase primary school enrollment, to eliminate disparities and inequalities, initiating a positive transformation of society in all spheres, establishing a basis for promoting the necessary human resource development, among other objectives, introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE). Before the introduction of the UPE program, there had been since independence, a gradual increase every year, in primary school enrollment. However, the increase was enormous, from 3,068,625 in 1996 to 5,303,564 in 1997 when the program started (MOES, 1999, p.3, 10, 11). These figures have been rising ever since.

### 3.2.3 Secondary education

Pupils who pass the primary leaving examinations can proceed to secondary school. This comprises of two levels; the first 4 years (lower secondary), from senior one (S1) to senior four (S4), make up what is called the Ordinary level (O-Level). At the end of 4 years, students sit the Uganda Certificate of Examination (UCE), O-level examinations, in at least 8 subjects. Depending on their results, candidates then have a choice of:

- a) Proceeding to upper secondary school (also called Advanced-Level (A-Level) or Higher School Certificate (HSC),
- b) Entering a Primary Teacher College,
- c) Enrolling in a Technical Institute, or
- d) Seeking out a skill training option in the private sector, for example, in business skills (MOES, 1999, p.5).

Most students choose to proceed to upper secondary school (A-level) or higher school certificate (HSC). Students can major in science or arts subjects, with a maximum of three major subjects and one minor subject. Advanced level lasts for two years, senior five (S5) and senior six (S6), at the end of which students sit for the Uganda Advanced certificate Exam-

ination (UACE) or A-level exams. All the three annual national examinations; primary leaving exam (PLE), Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) and Uganda Advanced certificate Examination (UACE) are held between October and December.

#### 3.2.4 Universities and other tertiary institutions

Depending on their A-level results, students compete for places to join state or private universities, teacher training colleges, one of several technical training or other tertiary institutions to pursue degrees, diplomas or certificates. Following certain criteria after the release of the A-level examination results, the government currently sponsors about 4,000 students with scholarships out of about 60,000 qualifying students to attend higher education. This means that many students are left out thus doing very little in enabling better access to higher education to all Ugandans. Those who are not part of the 4,000, but manage to join higher education through other means sometimes fail to sit for examinations at those institutes due to the failure to pay for the required fees. Against this background the government came up with a proposal to start students' loan scheme (MOES, 2012, p.4, 20). Eventually the government through parliament enacted the Education Students' Financing Act (2014) by setting up the Higher Education Students' Financing Board (HESFB), to increase equitable access to higher education in Uganda and also support qualified students who may not afford higher education. Eligible students can now get loans and scholarships to attend various public and private universities (HESFB, 2014, "Departments/loans and scholarships").

#### 3.2.5 Teacher education

Teacher preparation in Uganda is done at different levels. Several opportunities are available according to education levels and streams (general, and technical and vocational). Providers are both public and private institutions, which include: Early Childhood Development (ECD) teacher training institutions, Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs), National Teacher Colleges (NTCs), Instructor Training Colleges (ITCs), Mulago Health Tutor College, and universities. The teachers for the primary schools are prepared at three points: in Primary Teachers Colleges (PTCs) over a period of two years or at the National Teachers Colleges (NTCs) as up-graders for a period of two years or at university for a period of three years. Primary teachers are awarded Grade III teaching certificates or Diploma in Education (Primary) or Bachelors of Education degree. They are then posted to teach in any primary school in the country.

Teachers for the secondary schools are prepared at the National Teachers Colleges (NTCs) and Universities over a period ranging from one to three years. Secondary school teachers are awarded Grade V diplomas or postgraduate diplomas in Education (PGDE), or Bachelors of Science with Education degree (BSc.Ed) or Bachelors of Education degree (BEd.). Instructor Training Colleges (ITCs) provide Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) teacher training. The health tutor college trains tutors for health training schools such as nursing schools and schools for medical laboratory technicians (Okurut, n.d, p.1-2; UNESCO, 2014, p.59-60).

For purposes of quality assurance the training institutions are connected to other bodies like the Education Standards Agencies (ESA), the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) and the (TSC) Teaching Service Commission (Okurut, n.d, p.2).

### **3.3 Special needs education in Uganda**

Special needs education in Uganda, apparently, is an approach to delivering inclusive education. Special needs education in Uganda is undergirded by the 1992 White Paper on Education which clearly spells out the government's commitment to provide UPE to all learners irrespective of their ethnic origin, social group, religious affiliation, gender, to mention only a few. These learners include those with disabilities and others who encounter barriers to learning and development. The introduction of UPE and the current broadening of the concept of special needs in education has led to a much higher number of learners with special educational needs receiving education within the mainstream sector (Loican, Atim, Okot, Kembabazi & Eron, 2001, p.30).

Uganda is bound by International agreements that provide for learners with special needs, such as, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) and in consonance with the Government Constitution (1995), put in place the Persons with Disability Act (2006) and also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008). Both instruments demand for access, equity and quality as regards educational services for persons with special learning needs. To meet those requirements, the Ministry of Education and Sports put in place a department responsible for special needs and inclusive education. The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports says the traditional/long-established approach of special education was and is still focusing

on learners with disabilities specifically. Learning support was and still is provided in special schools and in special classes (Units/Annexes) integrated in the ordinary schools. Learners with barriers (special needs) arising from disability conditions usually require specialized support services, for example, sign language interpreters, Braille transcribers, specialized teaching methods, access to resource rooms and use of specialized technology to access curriculum. Summarily, this approach takes care of learners with visible impairments, usually in the severe-profound levels requiring specialized support. The ministry goes on to say that approach of special education is operational together with the current approach of inclusive education which focuses beyond both the traditional and the transitional practices of special education and integration respectively (MoESTS, 2016, para.1-2).

There are reports however, that Special needs education is beset by problems, one of which is disparity in financial resources. Ugandan officials recognize the increased need for funds for children with special needs and have called for increased funding. Funding is critical in the context of students with special needs. Intensive monitoring, smaller class sizes, assistive technology and other cost-intensive services can be key to the educational success of children with special needs. Limited funding affects the implementation of the “Special Needs Education policy, which has remained too slow and almost neglected, especially at the Local Governments levels” (Dennison, 2015, p.26). There are also still disparities in human resources.

Uganda has made major strides in education and training of special education teachers. Prior to the 1990's, Uganda had no policy related to the training of teachers in special needs. In 1991 Parliament established the Uganda National Institute of Special Education to train special education teachers. In 1992 the Ugandan Government established a policy on “Education for National Integration and Development”, pledging to support special needs education by providing funding and teacher training. Despite commendable strides over the past two decades, there are severe human resource needs in Uganda in the area of special education and the numbers of trained teachers are still small (Dennison, 2015, p.25-26).

### 3.3.1 Bodies responsible for the education system and special needs education

The ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports (MoESTS) is the overseer of the education sector. In doing this, it is guided by the Education Act and other related Acts of parliament, including the University Act, Tertiary institutions Act, various other Acts and

Charters for universities, to promote public and private education systems (MoESTS, 2015, p.28). It is mandated to ensure that quality education is provided at all levels, ensuring universal and equitable access to quality basic education for all children regardless of their status, ensuring equal access by gender, district and special needs at all levels of education, building capacity of districts by helping education managers acquire and improve on their knowledge, skills and attitudes to be able to plan, monitor, account and perform managerial functions, among others. It does the training, registering and supplying of all required teachers, prescribes a national curriculum and provides textbooks, administrators and inspectors. The mission of MoESTS is “to provide technical support, guide, coordinate, regulate and promote quality education, training and sports to all persons in Uganda for national integration, development and individual advancement.”

Commonly known as Ministry of Education, the Ministry comprises of 11 departments. These departments under four directorates are: Directorate of Basic and Secondary Education, Directorate of Higher, Technical, Vocational Education and Training, Directorate of Education Standards and the Directorate of Industrial Training. There are also affiliated institutions such as Education Service Commission, National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), National Council of Sports, and Uganda National Commission for UNESCO (UNATCOM) and other examination bodies including Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB), Uganda Business and Technical Examination Board, Uganda Allied Health Examination Board, Uganda Nurses and Midwives Examination Board (MoESTS, 2015, “About the ministry”).

However, although the government places education as one of the key sectors to be supported and seems to be determined to support the education sector and achieve the stated objectives, the budget allocation to the education sector has been declining. When the government started implementing the universal primary education (UPE) program towards the end of the 1990s, government expenditure on education increased from 13% at the start of this century and reached 21.9% by 2004. It however went on a down ward spiral, reaching 16.0% by 2009 and 12.9% by 2014 (World Bank, 2015, “Expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure”). That decline is amazing given the policy frameworks put in place that suggest more resources would be committed to the sector. But that decline still shows the education sector taking up the bulk of the allocations for the financial year 2013/2014, behind the road sector (Masereka, 2013, para.4). The picture presented appears to be mixed.

### 3.3.2 National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)

For the interest of this research, it is imperative to write something briefly about the institution that presides over the new curriculum that this research is about - the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC). The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) was set up in 1973, in an effort to review and re-structure the education system curriculum to match it with the country's realistic needs. The center is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports. Some of NCDC's responsibilities include, development of curricula and related materials for various levels of education (i.e. Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary), organizing capacity building courses for stakeholders on curricula and matters related to curriculum (NCDC, 2016, "The NCDC Act").

### 3.4 Challenges facing the education system

The challenges here concern the old lower secondary school curriculum that curriculum reforms are meant to address. The Uganda Secondary Education and Training: Curriculum, Assessment and Examination (CURASSE) Roadmap for Reform draft report (2008) and other reports give a blunt assessment of the need for reform of the secondary school curriculum.

The increase in the number of schools providing mass education means the increase in student numbers and per student cost which the ministry of education has to deal with in post primary education. The increase in the number of students enrolling to enter secondary school is mainly a consequence of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program and partly also the recognition of the importance of secondary education as one of the ways to build and expand the human capital needed for economic growth and social development. The existing curriculum, designed for a narrow academic elite will prove increasingly unsuitable for absorbing this intake and is a major cost driver. The increase in costs among other issues comes from the side of the curriculum, when the teachers have to deal with a bigger course load. The current lower secondary school curriculum requires students to study many subjects, ranging from 8 to 18 subjects which require a lot of resources. The ministry therefore, has to take measures to reduce the per-student cost of post-primary education, through reducing students' course load to five or six per term, consolidating subject matter

into fewer courses which are critical in achieving the competencies they require: mathematics, science, technology, communication, and social studies. Presently there are many subjects that are taught (and examined), particularly technical, vocational and science subjects, which need to be reduced, transferred to other cost-effective vocational institutions or even eliminated (Clegg, Bregman & Ottevanger, 2008, p. 11-13; MOES, 2008, p.31, 39).

As Uganda is grappling with transforming its subsistence economy into an integrated one, most of the population needs competencies with broad application, skills that will cater for the social and economic needs of the country. The general secondary school curriculum does not seem to promote that. There is need to shift from the present “strictly academic learning objectives that are thought to prepare students for erudite higher education and toward a set of competencies that serve both those who continue their education after S4 (senior 4) and those who choose to enter the workforce” (MOES, 2008, p.39). Thus, the need is there to come up with a curriculum that is broader in scope, that will provide learners with a variety of skills, including vocation ones, that will enable them to think critically and study efficiently and be able to make informed decisions as citizens and in other spheres of life. Equipping learners with a variety of skills is needed if Uganda is to realize its quest for a modern diversified economy. This calls for a shift from the current teaching methodologies inbuilt in the existing syllabuses that do not promote effective learning and acquisition of skills. The current curriculum is mainly a collection of examination syllabuses, geared towards achieving the highest grade in the examination with text books written towards that goal. Examinations assess mainly knowledge, with “very few marks given for showing an understanding of how to apply knowledge”. Skills remain largely untaught, and where they are taught, it is done in very limited range of rather insignificant ones in, for example, science practical examinations (Clegg, Bregman, Ottevanger, 2008, p.9). The domination of examination at all stages leads to neglect or limited time given to the assessment of other objectives of the curriculum, such as promotion of moral values, practical skills and participation in social and cultural activities (MOES, 1999, p.6).

The current curriculum does not adequately address the economic and social needs of the country. The country is undergoing a period of economic transformation whose sustainability will require a diversified labor force at all levels. The current curriculum does not seem to promote this as it mainly contributes to the production of more academic elites and less of competent middle-level technicians, whose needs are not served well by the current system. This is not helped by the fact that it has remained largely unchanged for over three

decades contrasting greatly with the rapidly changing demands made of the 21st century workforce. Most of the courses taught are not geared towards man power needs (Clegg, Bregman, Ottevanger, 2008, p.10; MOES, 1999, p.6).

The curriculum as it is does not take into account the current inequity in both access and quality in the Uganda secondary school system. Only 6 percent of children of the poorest 25 per cent of families complete secondary education, compared with 22 per cent from the richest 25 per cent. There is a considerable difference in the performance of the elite schools, most close to the capital city, and the remoter rural schools. The rate of failure in key subjects such as physics and mathematics is high, reportedly as high as 50%. The rural schools with fewer resources register most of the failure rates. This is not solely down to methodological and resource issues, it also requires a curriculum that is inclusive, sensitive to the needs of all learners, regardless of their talent (Clegg, Bregman, Ottevanger, 2008, p.9-10).

## 4 CURRICULUM REFORMS

This section presents a snapshot of curriculum reforms that have been made in primary education and subsequently, lower secondary education. This description serves to provide a background that led to the current reformed lower secondary school curriculum.

The background to current curriculum reform issues extends back to 1987 and the establishment of the Ugandan Education Review Commission (ERC) and subsequently, the 1992 Government White Paper on Education. Curriculum reform was one of the five major areas of quality improvement in education. Much effort in the curriculum reform was however put in the reform of primary school curriculum to match the focus on access with the issue of quality. The overwhelming demand for fee-free primary education was overshadowing the issue of quality. The focus on access notwithstanding, the Government of Uganda and its development partners appreciate that quality stands at the heart of an effective education system and several important reforms and programmes that have a direct bearing on quality have been implemented in parallel with the reforms that have supported increases in access. As a result of this therefore, a lot of emphasis was put on the primary school curriculum and syllabuses that would ‘provide a realistic, practical and affordable framework for the rapid achievement of literacy, numeracy and basic life skills for all primary students in Uganda’. The provision of a curriculum and syllabuses that can lead to that was believed to provide a good platform for progress to secondary education (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006, p.31).

Meanwhile the secondary school curriculum had remained unchanged for many years, with only minor changes made to it. The lower secondary school curriculum, has over the past 30 years only been changed by adding content. In spite of new subjects and new content being added, important key areas, for example, in the sciences such as earth sciences, an area of emerging economic significance, have remained excluded. Recent reform efforts took the approach of attempting to reduce the overall number of subjects, mainly by grouping existing ones. This was not satisfactory, in part because there was little consensus on what should be removed from the curriculum to lighten individual subject load. The current curriculum is outdated in its strong emphasis on subject content at the expense of learner acquisition of marketable skills and competencies (NCDC, 2016, para.1).

The need to reform the secondary school curriculum was given much needed impetus by the 3rd regional Secondary Education and Training in Africa (SEIA) Conference, held in Accra,

Ghana in April 2007. Delegations from over 38 African countries and international development partners participated in this conference to discuss the future of Secondary Education and Training in Africa (SEIA). At that gathering, it was mentioned that reform in secondary education should start by considering what African students should learn and what their schools should teach in order to face the challenges of the 21st century and promote economic growth in the region. This requires a fresh approach to the structure of the curriculum, setting ambitious standards of learning, introducing modern assessment tools, and ensuring that examinations measure what they are supposed to. Subsequent events in Uganda following this conference, such as, meetings with Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) staff, secondary school principals and teachers, and staff from Ugandan education institutions and universities, workshops, field visits, surveys, provided a rich forum for debate and many valuable “points of view”. Nobody in Uganda underestimated the challenges that the country faces in view of the “surge” of primary graduates and the pressures of economic growth (Clegg, Bregman, & Ottevanger, 2007, p.7).

Bound by the national legal and policy framework, coupled with the commitments to international conventions, the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All targets, which provide a clear rationale for a reformed curriculum, a radical shift within the secondary education sub-sector was embarked on. This has resulted in a curriculum that allows every learner to develop understandings and skills according to his or her ability from one designed for an elite minority of elite children bound for positions within the public service. It is hoped the reformed curriculum will provide each and every learner an opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes as envisaged in the 1992 White Paper and to achieve appropriate recognition for their attainment during their time in school (NCDC, 2016, para.3).

## 5 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In analyzing inclusion in the curriculum framework document and how its realization might be enhanced, the study also looks at Education For All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This will involve analyzing the different aspects in the curriculum framework document that show an inclination towards inclusive education. In this section, I will describe the different articulations of inclusive education, identify its key concepts, its main features and other aspects surrounding inclusive education.

Inclusive education is not something new. For centuries, many communities have practiced inclusion. For instance, “Indigenous education in Africa was, and is, inclusive,” (Kisanji, 1999, p.11), reflecting many of the features in today’s vision of inclusive education for all being sought after. Many communities in Africa had indigenous customary education best conceptualized as the process of socialization, child-rearing and formal/informal/non-formal learning, occurring at any time and place, and affecting any person living in a given culture or society. The inclusive nature of this indigenous education lay in the idea of all the elements of the resources of the family, community and the society contributing to the total education of the learners—be they children, youth or adults (Ociiti, J.P, 1994 as cited in Kisanji, 1998, p.56-57). Customary education was based on strong family ties, the value of the individual person, coexistence and survival. Its practice was guided by the following four principles.

- Absence or limited differentiation in space, time and status, thus allowing for individual differences: indigenous customary education was available and accessible to all community members wherever they were, during waking hours. The absence of differentiation pertains to overall availability and accessibility, could be interpreted to mean ‘education for all’ within that context.
- Relevance of content and methods: the content of indigenous customary education was drawn from the physical or natural and social environments, with strong ties to the religious/spiritual life of the people. The content passed on to the children was based on the practices that could benefit the extended family and community. For instance, moral and social values were adhered to by all community members, religious/spiritual values were demonstrated and practiced through rituals, ceremonies

and artifacts, whereas social and economic skills were learned through things like, apprenticeship, childhood and adult dance and play.

- **Functionality of knowledge and skills:** all the knowledge, attitudes and skills embodied in the curriculum of customary education were based on cultural transmission and advancement. Although they were exposed to a wide range of competencies required for cultural continuation, they needed to be essential, relevant and useful.
- **Community orientation:** all educational content and practice was based on and within the community. No child was sent to another community for education. It should be noted however, that this was not static - community values and practices change over time due to constant movement between, and interaction with, different communities and cultures due to intermarriages, search for better farmland or pasture or following displacement caused by natural disasters or wars. Thus communities were not isolated from each other, but rather in dynamic relationships (Kisanji, 1998, p.58-60).

### **5.1 Defining inclusive education**

Despite the efforts that have been made to bring about improvements in schools and learning, some children and young people remain marginalized by current arrangements and practices. In economically poorer countries, an estimated 72 million children are not in school. Meanwhile, in wealthier countries many young people leave school with no worthwhile qualifications, others are placed in various forms of special provision instead of mainstream education, and some simply choose to drop out since the lessons seem irrelevant to their lives. These challenges have heightened the interest in the idea of inclusive education (Ainscow and Miles, 2006, p.1).

The development of more inclusive systems of education remains one of the biggest challenges facing education providers throughout the world. However, inclusion remains a complex and controversial issue, and the development of inclusive practices in schools is not well understood. It is understood differently by teachers, parents, and policy makers. There is still a thinking in some countries, that inclusion is an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006, p.2). Globally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners, addressing a wider range of exclusion issues, such as gender, language, minority groups and others, to improve learning for all students. However, how

this is achieved may differ from country to country. There is no single model for ensuring that education is inclusive and approaches continue to evolve (Sightsavers, 2011, p.3).

Inclusive education ensures that the education system adapts to the needs of the child in order for it to achieve its full potential, other than expecting the child to adapt to the education system. It often involves changing and modifying teaching methods, school management and education planning. Doing this might involve working to change the structures, systems, policies, practices and cultures in schools and other institutions responsible for education, so that they can respond to the needs and diversity of students in their midst. This means all children, irrespective of their physical condition, not only have access to schooling within their own community, but that they are provided with appropriate learning opportunities to achieve their full potential. Inclusion also involves other efforts, for example, assisting children adapt to the curriculum, the buildings, the languages, images in the ordinary school (Rogers, 1999, p.165; Save the Children, 2009, p.2). Inclusion emphasizes opportunities for equal participation, but with options for special assistance and facilities as needed, and for differentiation, within a common learning framework. 'Differentiation' means teachers understanding the educational needs of their students and adopting different instructional strategies for different students, thus providing students with a range of options for learning and demonstrating their learning (Sightsavers, 2011, p.3, 15). The key point is to ensure the presence, participation and achievement of all students in education.

Inclusive education or inclusion in terms of education is spreading and gaining support, yet many different understandings, perspectives and varied opinions as to its meaning still exist. At times, it has been interpreted to mean the exact opposite of what it means. Following an international declaration at the international conference on special education held in Salamanca in 1994, which gave inclusive education impetus, inclusive education has been associated with special education and some people continue to think of 'inclusive education' as a new name for 'special education'. Whereas some definitions encompass many aspects of life, other definitions specifically refer to schools. The way inclusion is defined profoundly affects the way student or learner's difficulties are conceived and the interventions that are made to prevent or reduce them. The different understandings and varied opinions by educationalists, interest groups and organizations, parents, and others; uncertainties, disputes and contradictions, about inclusive education has led to disappointing progress in many countries around the world (Stubbs, 2008, p.38; Ainscow & Miles, 2006, p.1; Booth & Ainscow, 2005, p.3; Loreman, 2007, p.23; Pather & Nxumalo, 2013, p.422).

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) say that inclusion implies the restructuring of mainstream schooling to ‘accommodate’ rather than ‘assimilate’ every child irrespective of disability and ensures that all learners belong to a community, an argument that locates the discussion in a social-ethical discourse. They say that some people favor the notion of ‘inclusion’ because it embodies a range of assumptions about the meaning and purpose of schools and embraces a much deeper set of beliefs about what integration should mean. They also say that the term inclusion has become more popular and gained wider significance because of having greater social and political value (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p.131). This can mean that inclusion relates to all aspects of social, political, economic, and other issues that foster inequity, inequality, discrimination, oppression and other negative acts of exclusion in education and the wider society.

Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) suggest a typology of six ways of thinking about inclusion:

- 1) Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorized as ‘having special educational needs’.
- 2) Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion.
- 3) Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.
- 4) Inclusion as developing the school for all.
- 5) Inclusion as ‘Education for All’.
- 6) Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society.

A commentary on each of them cautions against focusing on only one aspect of inclusion that might be present in each of the six ways of inclusion, for example, focusing on a ‘disabled’ or ‘special needs’ part of inclusion and ignoring all the other ways in which participation for any student may be impeded or enhanced. They take as a starting point a view of inclusion which involves a broad articulation of the values which inclusive practices should attempt to embody. They articulate inclusive values as concerned with equity, participation, community, compassion, respect for diversity, sustainability (used to mean preparing children and young people for sustainable ways of life within sustainable communities and environments) and entitlement.

The writers say this list is in a state of constant evolvment. Inclusion is a never ending process. It could involve other things like honesty, freedom, achievement, spirituality and so

forth. There is a need for not only knowing what those values mean, but also their implications for practice and how they might be put into practice in a collaborative effort involving the participation of staff, parents/carers and other community members. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) suggest some broad features of inclusion and therefore, define inclusion as referring to:

- The processes of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from the curricula, cultures and communities of local schools.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality.
- The presence, participation and achievement of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorized as ‘having special educational needs’ (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006, p.15-25).

Ainscow and Susie (2006) suggest a definition of inclusion they say can be used to guide policy moves. They claim four key elements tend to feature strongly in what inclusion means and includes. The four elements are as follows:

- Inclusion is a process. That is to say, inclusion has to be seen as a never ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference, and, learning how to learn from difference. In this way differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning, amongst children and adults.
- Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers. Consequently, it involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. It is about using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.
- Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students. Here ‘presence’ is concerned with where children are educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend; ‘participation’ relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves; and ‘achievement’ is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results.

- Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement. This indicates the moral responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically most at risk are carefully monitored, and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement within the education system (Ainscow & Miles, 2006, p.2-3).

The Salamanca statement (1994) and UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (2016) also suggest definitions which can be put into perspective. The Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) seen internationally as one of the most important standpoints for the development of inclusive education says Inclusive education means that:

“Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.” (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, para. 3).

The UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education defines inclusive education as follows:

“Inclusive education should be viewed in terms of including traditionally excluded or marginalized groups or making the invisible visible. The most marginalized groups are often invisible in society: disabled children, girls, children in remote villages, minority groups and the very poor. These invisible groups are excluded from governmental policy and access to education” (UNESCO, 2016, para.1).

Although there is no universally agreed understanding on inclusive education, it can be assumed that despite the differences, some common assumptions and visions can be shared and exist.

## **5.2 What about integration**

It is important to make a distinction between integration and inclusion. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) say that the two terms are often used interchangeably and it is not at all clear that they have common meaning across national boundaries. This means the two terms could

be used differently in different contexts. However, inclusion has recently replaced integration in the vocabulary of special educators as a more radical term located within a human rights discourse (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p.131).

According to Fredrickson and Cline (2002, p.65) integration involves the school in a process of assimilation where the onus is on the assimilating individual (whether a pupil with Special Education Needs or a pupil with a different cultural and linguistic background) to make changes so that they can 'fit in'. By contrast inclusion involves the school in a process of accommodation where the onus is on the school to change, adapting curricula, methods and procedures so that it becomes more responsive.

The notion of 'integration' tends to focus more on children with disabilities attending school rather than ensuring that these children are learning whereas inclusive education focuses more on ensuring children with disabilities are learning (DFID, 2010, p.4). An integrated approach to education can be seen as suggesting that diversity is a problem to be overcome as it is a burden on resources and detracts from the amount of time a teacher can dedicate to other students (Sightsavers, 2011, p.4).

Inclusion seems to encompass a wide range of values, beliefs and principles. One of them is the human rights discourse. Inclusive education is about the child's right to participate and benefit on an equitable basis with their counterparts in the same school, locality or elsewhere, putting context in mind. Inclusive approaches stress the duty of schools and educational systems as a whole to adapt to the student(s) and, in principle, accept all children. Inclusive education locates the 'problem' of exclusion firmly within the system, not the person or their characteristics. Emphasis is placed upon full participation by all students, irrespective of their educational capabilities gender, ethnicity, language, health status, economic status, religion, disability, life-style and other forms of difference, which should all be acknowledged and respected. Identifying barriers to inclusive education from policy, resources, finance and other factors is found to encourage and promote participation and overcome barriers to learning and participation for all people. In this way, diversity in the classroom and wider society is embraced and celebrated (Stubbs, 2008, p. 8, 72- 73).

### 5.3 Segregation

Very often students who have a particular or any number of disabilities are segregated in separate classrooms or schools because of their disability. This means a child will only associate with children with special needs. Proponents of this kind of approach claim it has some advantages. First, they say that students with special needs require teachers who are trained in the area of special education – trained to work with students who have a variety of disabilities. Related to the body of knowledge and skills possessed by special educators, there is also the perception that special education provides more individualized attention for students with special needs. Another advantage cited by advocates of segregation is that, in segregated classrooms, students with disabilities are not pressured to “keep up” with typical students. Proponents claim that segregated classrooms have nothing to do with morality, but rather with the practical issue concerning the cost of integrating special needs students. According to some advocates of segregation, maintaining a segregated system is cheaper than integrating students with special needs into the regular classrooms (Dixon, n.d, p.4-5).

But segregation also has disadvantages: The cost of providing education for children with disabilities is estimated to be 7 to 9 times higher when placed in special schools as opposed to providing for their needs in mainstream education. Distance to a segregated school [if it is far from the child’s place of residence] can result in higher transportation costs. It also results in the child being deprived of socialization opportunities and prone to continued exclusion. Segregation also reinforces discrimination against those with disabilities. It may unnecessarily segregate children with mild disabilities, making the disability worse (DFID, 2010, p.5).

## **6 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION FOR ALL**

This chapter focuses on the Education for All (EFA), a global movement committed to providing quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. I will later use this framework to analyse how the new reformed curriculum addresses the issue of inclusive education at lower secondary in Uganda. EFA represents an international commitment to ensure that every child and adult receives basic education of good quality. This commitment is based both on a human rights perspective, and on the generally held belief that education is central to individual well-being and national development. The movement was launched at the World Conference on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 by UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank. The Conference was co-sponsored by an additional 18 governments and organizations. Despite notable efforts by countries around the globe to ensure the right to education for all, as was declared by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, daunting problems in the world that constrained efforts to meet basic learning, led to deterioration of education and other realities that necessitated the world conference.

It was noted at that time that more than 100 million children, including at least 60 million girls had no access to primary education. More than 960 million adults, two thirds of whom were women, were illiterate, and functional illiteracy was a significant problem in all countries, industrialized and developing. More than 100 million children and countless adults were noted as failing to complete basic education programs. In order to confront the challenges posed, with strength and purpose, and also to seize the promise and possibilities upon the world, the participants agreed that education, if extended to all could be a vehicle for ensuring a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world, while simultaneously contributing to social, economic, and cultural progress, tolerance, and international cooperation. The participants, therefore, pointed out that education was an indispensable, though not sufficient key for improvement of the many aspects of humanity (UNESCO, 1990, p.1-2). At that time participants endorsed an 'expanded vision of learning' and a pledge to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade. Even though the concept of inclusive education was not used at that juncture, this was a landmark conference in the development of thinking about inclusive education (Miles & Singal, 2008, p. 4-5).

The calls on the international community to endorse the approach of inclusive schools, namely enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs and the need to further the objective of Education for all, led to more than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations meeting in Salamanca, Spain, from 7 to 10 June 1994. The Conference adopted the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action. The statement adopted a dynamic perspective on Education for All, particularly targeting disabled children. The statement reiterates the commitment to Education for All, recognizing the necessity and urgency of providing education for children, youth and adults with special educational needs within the regular education system. The conference proclaimed (among other things) the need to:

“...Recognize that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, and that education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs... The statement asserts “...regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all...” (UNESCO, 1994, p.viii-ix).

The World Conference went on to call upon all governments to:

- give the ‘highest policy and budgetary priority’ to improve education services so that all children could be included, regardless of differences or difficulties
- ‘adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education’ and enroll all children in ordinary schools unless there were compelling reasons for doing otherwise
- develop demonstration projects and encourage exchanges with countries with inclusive schools
- ensure that organizations of disabled people, along with parents and community bodies, are involved in planning and decision-making
- put greater effort into pre-school strategies as well as vocational aspects of inclusive education
- ensure that both initial and in-service teacher training address the provision of inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994, p.viii-x).

Ten years later after the EFA conference in Thailand, with many countries far from having reached the EFA goals, the international community met again in Dakar, Senegal, and affirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All by the year 2015. The expanded commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action, identified inclusion as a key challenge:

“...to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All as an inclusive concept is reflected in national government and funding agency policies. Education for All...must take account of the need of the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs...” (UNESCO, 2000, p.14).

The participants at the Dakar conference identified six key education goals which aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

- 1) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- 2) Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- 3) Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.
- 4) Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- 5) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- 6) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The EFA goals were also envisioned to contribute to the global pursuit of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted by 189 countries and world's leading development institutions in 2000. The MDGs were seen as part of a broader commitment towards building a better world in the 21 century by eliminating global poverty, promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. Two MDGs relate specifically to edu-

cation but none of the eight MDGs can be achieved without sustained investment in education. Education gives the skills and knowledge to improve health, livelihoods and promote sound environmental practices. The importance of education as a strategy in poverty reduction is made explicit in these international targets which seek to end the vicious cycle of exclusion from education leading to chronic poverty and further social exclusion (Miles & Singal, 2008, p.5; UNESCO, 2016 “The six EFA Goals, History”).

### **6.1 Inclusive education and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG)**

The heads of State and government and high representatives, meeting at United Nations headquarters in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 as the Organization celebrated its seventieth anniversary, decided on new global Sustainable Development Goals, including goal 4: Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. These heads of State and government and high representatives declared thus:

“We commit to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels – early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training. All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. We will strive to provide children and youth with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities, helping our countries to reap the demographic dividend, including through safe schools and cohesive communities and families” (UN, 2015, p.7).

The new development agenda: *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, an ambitious plan with 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, which the heads of State and governments and representatives adopted seeks to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what they did not achieve. The SDGs are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. As expected, the global education agenda (Education 2030) is part of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that make up the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. Education is identified as a crucial driver in the achievement of these goals. The SDGs reflect the important role of education by encapsulating targets in a stand-alone goal 4: Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education is also included in goals on health, growth

and employment, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change. To ensure the attainment of goal 4 by 2030, governments should ensure (among other things) that:

4.1 By 2030, all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

4.2 By 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States (UN, 2015, p.1, 17).

The six goals identified in Dakar, in 2000 and now the 17 SDGs, clearly identify Inclusive Education (IE) as a key strategy for the development of EFA as an important element needed in meeting the greatest global challenges and achieving sustainable development.

## 7 EDUCATION POLICIES, LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND INCLUSION IN UGANDA

In this section, I will describe some Ugandan Education policies and legal documents that talk about education in general and issues surrounding inclusion. The aim is to compare them with the lower secondary school curriculum framework and the various international commitments and documents concerning the concept of inclusive education.

The current government commitment to the education sector can be seen from some initiatives it has put in place over the years to improve the education sector at all levels. The government aims at revitalizing the quality of education services through a combination of a number of ways like improved resource utilization, strengthened management and organizational systems, selective rationalization of operations and additional well targeted resources.

Education policies in Uganda are governed by the 1995 constitution (as amended), statutory laws/Acts (these are passed by parliament, for example, the Education Act), Statutory instruments/Rules and Regulations, usually enacted by the line Ministry to operationalize the specific Act, and policies - general principles which guide government in the management of its public affairs. The following are some of the instruments that highlight the right to education in Uganda.

### *The 1995 Constitution*

The 1995 Constitution (as amended), is the supreme law of the land, the source of all legal authority and must be obeyed by all people and authorities. The 1995 Constitution, particularly Chapter Four, contains numerous rights provisions that apply to children as to adults, including the right to education, in article 30. The constitution specifies in Article 34(2) that each child is entitled to basic education, which is a shared responsibility of the state and the child's parents. It goes on to say in Article 34(3) that children should not be deprived of education or any other benefit on the basis of religious or other beliefs. The constitution states that:

- 1) The State shall promote free and compulsory basic education.
- 2) The State shall take appropriate measures to afford every citizen equal opportunity to attain the highest educational standard possible.

- 3) Individuals, religious bodies and other non-governmental organizations shall be free to found and operate educational institutions if they comply with the general educational policy of the country and maintain national standards (Constitution of Uganda, 1995, 'XVIII, Educational Objectives').

This right to education as put down by the 1995 Uganda constitution and other national Acts and statutes, mentioned below and others is universally recognized as a human right embedded in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966). The right to education includes the right to free, compulsory primary education for all, an obligation to avail secondary education to all, and to develop equitable access to higher education (OHCHR, 2016, p.4-5).

#### *Children's Act - Chapter 59 laws of Uganda*

The children's Act defines a child as a person below eighteen years. The Act puts into effect the constitutional provisions on children and emphasizes the protection of the child by upholding the rights, protection, duties and responsibilities as contained in the Convention on Rights of the Child and the Organization for African Unity Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child, with appropriate modification to suit the circumstances in Uganda and other international and regional instruments (UNICEF, n.d, p.12).

The Children's Act provides that all children must be educated and guided. It tasks the state to provide resources, and obliges the parents to make sure the children attend school. There should be a clear duty on the government to ensure that classes are limited to the UN teacher – student ration of 1:40, so as to ensure quality (Ojijo, 2014, para.10). Education should be provided to children in all situations [whatever custody they are under], be it foster care, adoption or other custody. The children with disabilities, many times get excluded from schooling. The Children's Act puts it to government to take steps to see that those children are: Assessed as early as possible to determine the extent and nature of their disabilities, afforded facilities for their rehabilitation, appropriate treatment and equal opportunities to education (Chapter 59. The Children Act, 1997 as cited in UNICEF, n.d, p.14).

### *Education Act 2008*

The Education Act is one of the many education documents that is supposed to guide the achievement of the aims of education in Uganda as contained in the 1989 Education Policy Review Commission Report (EPRC) titled “Education for National Integration and Development” and the 1992 Government White Paper on Education that have laid the foundation for education reform over the last 25 years (Mbabazi, Arinaitwe & Tumushabe, n.d, p.1). The Education Act, 2008 points out that ‘basic education shall be provided and enjoyed as a right by all persons’ (p.10). The Act stipulates government’s policy on the provision of education and training, the responsibilities of stakeholders, licensing of teachers, the control and management of schools, and the quality control of education. It does this by clearly delineating the powers and roles of the various players in the education sector. It demarcates the role of government agencies and others in issues such as curriculum provision, designing, development, and implementation, monitoring and revision (Education Act, 2008, p.9-12).

### *The Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Act*

This piece of legislation promotes vocational education in the country. The Act provides the legal and institutional framework for BTVET programs and roles of different providers. It formalizes reforms in the subsector by introducing and promoting flexible modular training which suits trainees occupational or skills requirements; introducing certification based on a vocational qualification framework; recognizing prior formal and non-formal training under the Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework. One of the aims of the Act is to increase equitable access to disadvantaged groups such as women and people with disabilities (Mbabazi, Arinaitwe & Tumushabe, n.d, p.10).

### *The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2005-2015*

Basing on Uganda vision 2040 (a plan that articulates clear strategies and policy directions to transform the country into a competitive upper middle income), a plan which also incorporates a commitment to education as a development priority, the Uganda government came up with the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) 1997-2003, which provided a framework on which the development of education in Uganda over the medium term was formulated. The Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) as well as associated programme frameworks was to incorporate short term Universal Primary Education (UPE) initiatives,

detailing of medium term developments in Primary and Secondary education and charting the way forward for Post-Secondary and Higher education. At least one quarter of public spending to the sector for the medium term was to be allocated to this initiative, together with growing contributions from the private sector, local communities and households (MOES, 1998, p.1).

Owing to and responding to the different forces at the local, in the immediate region and the globe, and the fact that the government had achieved the enrolment target in the universal primary education policy (a major priority in the ESIP), it replaced the ESIP with Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2004-2015, revised later in 2007. Like the ESIP, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) was meant to consolidate some of the gains made in the education sector. The ESSP 2004-2015, which has undergone further revision to suit different needs, has three purposes:

- a) To help the Ministry fulfil its mission, which is “to support, guide, coordinate, regulate and promote quality education and sports to all persons in Uganda for national integration, individual and national development;”
- b) To guide all sub-sectors in their regular medium-term and annual planning and budgeting exercises; and
- c) To help the Ministry of Education, as sector coordinator, negotiate with other government agencies, other actors in the education sector, and external funding agencies about the scope and use of their investments in the education sector.

The ESSP has a number of objectives which include, for example, designing an education system relevant to Uganda’s national development goals, ensuring that students achieve education goals, ensuring an effective and efficient education sector, all aimed at grooming enough men and women with the competencies needed to achieve its development goals. The ESSP is in line with Uganda’s commitments to the international community that have an impact on its long term plans. These are the Millennium Development Goals [now replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals] and the Education for All goals (EFA). The Plan is in line with those broad sets of goals. Therefore, although the main priority of the ESSP plan was to increase universal access to primary education, it mentions measures of increasing and equitable participation of students who make the transition to secondary education, of plans to reach disadvantaged communities, such as, dispersed communities, poor rural and poor urban communities, so that they also receive education, lower social-cultural

barriers to girls' attendance, improving equity in participation of girls and needy students by targeting grants to schools in needy areas and bursaries to individual students, continuing to conduct regular assessments of services to children with special needs, in an effort to implement its policy of inclusive education (MOES, 2004, p.1-3, 8, 12, 13, 15).

#### *Gender in Education Policy*

The Gender in Education policy (GEP) was designed in line with the 10 Year Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2007-2017) and provides a framework for the implementation and monitoring of a gender sensitive and responsive education system in Uganda. The GEP envisioned to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3: “achieve Universal Primary Education” and “achieve gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels by 2015”, in the education system. GEP’s other goals and objectives are: Promote the provision of relevant knowledge and skills equally to males and females; ensure gender responsive planning, budgeting, programming and monitoring and evaluation; promote an enabling and protective environment for all persons (MOES, 2012, p.4; GOU, 2016, p.2).

#### *Non-Formal Education Policy 2011*

Initially called the Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children 2006, this policy has been revised to be called Non Formal Education Policy 2011. The policy is meant to address the inclusion of children out of school, who are often excluded because of the rigidity of the formal school system, by providing viable complementary basic education programmes and by making the formal school approach more responsive; strengthen and harmonize existing and future partnerships in on-going strategies for providing basic education for educationally disadvantaged children; and provide an opportunity for the review and harmonization of existing policies with particular emphasis to addressing the rights of educationally disadvantaged children (GOU, 2016, p.3).

#### *Strategic Plan for Universal Secondary Education in Uganda 2009-2018*

Universal Secondary Education (USE) is a component of Universal Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET), 2007 and covers lower secondary education (senior one to senior four). The main reason for the creation of the USE program is to address the large inflows

of students from primary level. That is to create access to secondary education. The goals and objectives of the policy are: Increase and improve equitable access to quality secondary education; improve the quality and relevancy of secondary education; and increase effectiveness and efficiency in delivery of secondary education (Brans, 2011, p.44; GOU, 2016, p.3).

### *Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy 2011*

The draft policy on special needs and inclusive education 2011 stipulates guidelines for provision of specialized instructional materials, equipment and supportive services. The policy will also ensure that where possible, learners with special needs study in an inclusive environment to enable them benefit from an interactive school atmosphere. It also provides for training of special needs and inclusive education personnel, guides on access to physical environment in schools, the curriculum, assessment and information. The policy seeks to increase enrolment, participation and completion of schooling by persons with special learning needs, strengthen and systematize existing initiatives/programs on special needs education and Inclusive education. The policy is in line with Uganda's commitment to observe and respect human rights especially for marginalized groups in the country. In a ministerial statement, the minister of education and sports said that the legislation for providing special education is embedded in the National Constitution (1995) which provides for the right to education, provision of affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason (GOU, 2016, p.6; Ssenkaaba, 2014, para.1).

Categories of children/young people who could benefit from special education initiatives could be:

- 1) The 'un-reached' children: including those of rural and urban communities in disadvantaged conditions, and those not within easy reach of schools.
- 2) The early dropouts: those leaving school before reaching the end of primary school, for reasons of age, motivation, socio-economic circumstances, HIV and AIDS, or for other reasons.
- 3) The over-aged young people: especially those above 12 years of age who are still in need of basic education.
- 4) Orphans and vulnerable children: these may go to school, but may drop out early, have difficulties attending, or not benefit from learning.

- 5) The unsuccessful primary leavers: those who reach Primary grade 7 and leave without passing the primary leaving examination and have no opportunity to continue learning (Hoppers, 2008, p.37).

*The Equal opportunities Commission (EOC)*

This commission was set up by an Act of Parliament - The Equal opportunities Commission Act 2007. This act legalizes affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups. The Equal Opportunities Commission is a constitutional body mandated to eliminate discrimination and inequalities against any individual or group of persons on the ground of sex, age, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, health status, social or economic standing, political opinion or disability, and take affirmative action in favor of groups marginalized for any reason in history. The functions of the Equal Opportunities Commission include (among others) monitoring and evaluating and ensuring that policies, laws, programmes and customs of organs of the state at all levels are compliant with the requirement for affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups. The EOC has the power to hear complaints of discrimination and marginalization of individuals and groups and to order redress for these groups (The Equal opportunities Commission, 2013 as cited in the New Vision, 2013, para.5).

## **8 METHODOLOGY**

Having decided on a focus for the research, the research questions to be answered, and the overall research strategy that is appropriate for getting those answers, you need to think about the methods (how will you go about what a detective would call ‘making enquiries’?). In the more usual research language, this for instance, would be through observation, interviewing, using questionnaire. A rational decision has to be made in order to choose a research strategy and methods that are suitable. Practicalities must also be considered and anything you propose to do must be feasible within the constraints of available time and resources (Robson, 2002, p.223-224).

This section deals with the methodology, data collection techniques and data analysis employed. It begins with the research questions followed by an explanation of the relevance of qualitative research. The epistemology and methods used are presented after that.

### **8.1 Research question**

I aim to study the issue of inclusion as reflected in the proposed reformed lower secondary school curriculum of Uganda. I also use data from interviews solicited from two people familiar with the curriculum reform process and inclusion. On account of this, the central research question is: How does the new lower secondary school curriculum address the issue of inclusion of the different categories of students?

### **8.2 Qualitative research**

Different perspectives are provided by different authors about qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.2), say qualitative research is a multimethod technic, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. It means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. The many methods availed by qualitative research allow the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals’ lives. Creswell (1998, p.15) in his definition reiterates the characteristics mentioned earlier in his early writings and says that qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on the distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem.

The researcher looks at a phenomenon in a complex way and holistically analyzes and reports it in a detailed way. Schreier (2012), presents the key features of qualitative research as:

- 1) Interpretive. Qualitative research deals with symbolic material that needs interpretation and that the same material can be interpreted in different valid ways.
- 2) Naturalistic. It preserves real life context and does not manipulate the research setting.
- 3) Qualitative research is also situational. It takes context into consideration.
- 4) It is also reflexive. The reflexivity of the participants is acknowledged and how the researcher co-creates the data.
- 5) It is also characterized by emergent flexibility, allowing a researcher to continue to adapt and change all aspects of their research as they are collecting and beginning to analyze data.
- 6) Inductive. Closely related to emergent flexibility, the inductive nature of qualitative research allows a non-pre-structured or standardized way of data collection and analysis. Schreier (2012), also says that qualitative research allows the study of cases in their entirety and in-depth and lastly, it is focused on validity, referring to both the extent to which your instruments capture what you want to capture and the overall quality of the study (Schreier, 2012, p.20-28). Despite the generic definition of qualitative research, no matter the form, it has some procedures that are common to all. For instance, beginning with assumptions, the possible use of a theoretical perspective, the study of research problems using a given approach, the collection of data, data analysis that is most often inductive (Creswell, 2007, p.37).

I have chosen qualitative research for several reasons. First, as Schreier (2012), points out among other things, it is flexible, contextual and reflexive. Its flexibility allows the use of a theory driven approach or data driven approach of content analysis which provides room to decide on the key codes and concepts as I went through the material. This research methodology also allows for more description and interpretation of a case under study. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000, p.138), also point out those purposes, including possible theory generation and testing. Qualitative research provides for the possibility of highlighting the voices of the participants, reflexivity of the researchers, various ways of describing and interpreting a research problem, and results that can add to the literature or provide a call for

action. So, when a flexible style is needed to interpret a detailed, complex problem, a qualitative approach would be the most appropriate (Creswell, 2007, p.51).

Qualitative research allows a researcher to try and explore the different factors that influence the different decisions taken by policy makers, in this case the objectives of Uganda education authorities in designing the curriculum as it is. Qualitative research can be used to explore a number of problems in the social and human sciences, and today it is deeply involved in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups (Creswell, 2007, p.43).

### **8.3 Epistemology**

My research is based on an emancipatory paradigm. The features of an emancipatory paradigm include the focus on the lives and experiences of diverse groups, such as women, minorities, and persons with disabilities that traditionally have been marginalized. It examines how results of social enquiry into inequities are linked to political and social action (Mertens et al., 1994 as cited in Robson, 2002, p.28). The emancipatory theory used here is the critical education theory, a branch of critical theory applied to the field of education, to explore how the new reformed curriculum is inclusive. This framework highlights an ideology of education as an instrument of social transformation and as a means of attaining social, cultural, and economic equity. The field covers a wide range of educational issues, for example, the curriculum, the pedagogy or teaching style, the role of the State, the influence of corporate power, the so-called hidden curriculum (Ward, 2013, para.1-2). Examining the curriculum reform through this theoretical lens enables the understanding of different decisions taken in education policy and practice.

Critical theory provides a framework for understanding and analyzing power relationships in society. Critical theory is concerned with injustice, inequality, and oppression that highlight the power imbalances in all societies. Concerning education, critical theory examines the structure of schooling as well as the many elements of the education process, for example, teacher training, testing, governance, curriculum, which create unequal power relationships between and among administrators, teachers, and learners. Critical research is geared towards action and change, towards awakening awareness about conditions in society and in this case education that restricts options, reinforces hierarchies, reproduces unjust structures, and continues to marginalize certain groups of people (Capper, 1998; Creswell, 1998 as cited in Wood, 2008, p.7 & 12).

I consider critical theory as the approach I have applied to my research, as the research looks at how inclusion is addressed in the curriculum framework, looking at what could be its strengths and weaknesses. The historical problems of discrimination (one theme of interest to critical researchers (Creswell, 2013, p.30), that took root in early years of Uganda, highlighted in this thesis, also places this research in the realm of critical approach. This approach fits my goal of looking at the curriculum framework vis-à-vis the national and international instruments that advocate for inclusive education.

#### **8.4 The data**

The research material comprises of the lower secondary school curriculum framework document 2013 and two interviews. The total number of pages in the curriculum framework document is 156, including list of figures and tables, Acronyms and Abbreviations, Glossary, Executive Summary and the Appendices. The Lower Secondary School Curriculum Framework Document 2013 comprises of the following chapters:

- 1) Foreword and purpose
- 2) What is a curriculum?
- 3) Education policy context and rationale for reform
- 4) Curriculum principles and values
- 5) Key learning outcomes of the lower secondary curriculum
- 6) The lower secondary curriculum framework
- 7) What learners should learn - Generic Skills
- 8) What learners should learn - Learning Areas
- 9) Learning time
- 10) How learners will learn
- 11) Learning and teaching materials
- 12) Assessment
- 13) Curriculum implementation and evaluation

The appendices consist of Structure of the Education System, Curriculum process and machinery, Organizations and their issues, Generic skills baskets and specific competencies, Developing Continuous Assessment for Summative Purposes, Terminology used in syllabus documents, Learning Area Syllabus Structure and References.

The content analysis process of the material started by careful reading and identifying the themes that are central to inclusive practices. My intention was not to find out how frequently these themes appear, but I was more interested in how they are used to define inclusion. I chose to use the whole sentences in which the words and phrases (or expressions) were used as the recording units. In the document I looked at all the places where those themes appear, but paid much more attention to these chapters:

- 4) Curriculum principles and values
- 5) Key learning outcomes of the lower secondary curriculum
- 6) The lower secondary curriculum framework
- 7) What learners should learn - Generic Skills
- 8) What learners should learn - Learning Areas
- 9) Learning time
- 10) How learners will learn
- 11) Learning and teaching materials
- 12) Assessment

### *Interview data*

I did two interviews with two people familiar with the reformed curriculum when I was in Kampala, Uganda between October and November 2015. As I did not know beforehand the right people who were informed about the reformed curriculum, I was connected to those people by another person under whose supervision I was while doing some training in the aforementioned period. I have given the interviewees the pseudonyms of Mijingo and Nama. I explained to each respondent about the intention of my research project and why I had a particular interest in interviewing them. Both of the respondents decided to answer the questions on the respective days I met them. I gained their oral consent to conduct the interviews. I used a sound recorder on my laptop to record the two interviews. One interview lasted 38 minutes and the other 41 minutes. I asked them about what prompted the new curriculum, the main ideas on which it is based, whether they think all learners are catered for, how instruction in the curriculum accommodates all learners and whether the teachers are informed about the new curriculum. The full questions I asked can be found in the appendix. I transcribed the two interviews after I returned to Finland. Together, the interview transcripts resulted in 16 hand written pages. As for the interviews, I also looked out for the themes and words that express inclusive practices both explicitly and implicitly.

## 8.5 Content analysis

I use qualitative content analysis for data analysis and interpretation. There are various definitions of content analysis and a few are provided. Content analysis as a research technique is used for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. The researchers working at another different point in time and maybe different circumstances should get the same results from the same technique, using the same data. The use of content analysis is not restricted to text as in the above definition and the phrase “other meaningful matter” is intended to denote the full extent of its use to interpret works of art, images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols and even numerical records (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18-19). Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

Qualitative content analysis is a method that can be used to systematically describe the meaning of qualitative data. By reducing the amount of material, a researcher can carry out systematic steps in analyzing data. Its systematic nature calls for the examining of every single part of the material that in any way could be relevant to the research question. This helps in reducing or removing the possibility of looking at the material only from the researchers’ perspective (Schreier, 2014, p.171). Contemporary content analysis has three distinguishing characteristics: It is “an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent”. Empirically grounded means that content analysis tries to show the relevance and applicability of theoretical events. Through those characteristics, content analysis allows content analysts to examine data, printed matter, images, or sounds - texts in order to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent and the like. This research technique provides new insights, increases a researcher’s understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions (Krippendorff, 2004, p. xvii, p.xviii, p.18).

In comparison to quantitative content analysis, qualitative content analysis is flexible. It typically combines varying portions of theory-driven and data-driven categories within any one coding frame. Part of the categories should always be data-driven, to make sure that the categories match the data (Schreier, 2014, p.171). As already stated, in qualitative content analysis, creating main categories and subcategories can be done using a concept-driven or

data-driven way. There can also be cases, where both approaches can be used. I mainly use a concept-driven approach of qualitative content analysis. This means that the categories are based on previous existing theory, previous research, everyday knowledge, logic or an interview guide. A theory-driven type is less time consuming than the data-driven approach since it is not strictly necessary to go through all data in order to select the categories. When you use the data-driven approach to generate categories and subcategories, the several strategies available to choose from require someone to go through several steps, examining one passage after another to create the categories and subcategories, which is not the case with the theory-driven approach (Schreier, 2014, p.176).

Weber (1990 cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1277) explains that the specific type of content analysis approach chosen by a researcher varies with the theoretical and major interests of the researcher and the problem being studied. The flexibility of content analysis allows many approaches from which a researcher can choose. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p.1278-1283), identified three distinct approaches to content analysis. The first one is called conventional qualitative content analysis, in which coding categories are received inductively from the raw data. The second is directed content analysis, in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings. The themes then emerge from the data during the process of data analysis by the researcher. The purpose of this approach usually is to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory. And the third one is called summative content analysis which starts with the counting of words or manifest content, then extends the analysis to include latent meanings and themes. All three approaches are used to interpret text data from an assumption that there are multiple interpretations of reality and how individuals construct their own reality within their social context. All approaches to qualitative content analysis require a similar analytical process of seven classic steps, including formulating the research questions to be answered, selecting the sample to be analyzed, defining the categories to be applied, outlining the coding process and the coder training, implementing the coding process, determining trustworthiness, and analyzing the results of the coding process (Kaid, 1989, as cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1285).

My research is content analysis as I have analyzed curriculum framework document text and recorded interviews. The purpose for this was to understand the concept of inclusion as it is understood in the text and the interviews. This would ultimately, answer my research questions.

My research mainly uses the concept driven approach to content analysis as it uses inclusive education theories and research, in analyzing the reformed curriculum framework and the recorded interviews. These have provided the platform from which to understand the issue of inclusion in the new reformed curriculum. The process of content analysis has involved an iterative process concerning the data. This research employed the steps used in content data analysis.

I did a thorough reading of the data and identified concepts and characteristics that are considered relevant to inclusive education. The characteristics and themes are mentioned in literature and various global reports as vital to inclusive education. The reading included every section of the curriculum framework document and parts of the interview that explicitly or implicitly mentioned some aspects of inclusion. The sentences in the document and the interviews considered to have a bearing on the research question were organized into categories. The categories (also called ‘dimensions’) are the aspects on which I focused my analysis. Subsequently, five categories came up:

The condensed sentences from which the five categories were derived are presented in the table below. These were taken from both the lower secondary curriculum framework and the interviews.

### **Participation**

‘Ensuring the inclusion, **participation** and achievement of all learners’ p.88

‘...NCDC and its partners are preparing guidelines to support teachers, schools and districts **to ensure the inclusion, participation** and achievement of all learners...’ p.13

‘...seeks to **mitigate factors that form barriers to children’s participation** in learning and development...’ p.23

‘...**participation** in vocational training and academic learning and certification will ultimately enjoy parity of esteem...’ p.38

‘...One of the main purposes of learning in Creative Arts is to develop lifelong appreciation of, and **participation** in, expressive arts and cultural activities...’ p.54

Learners should be able to ‘... **participate** in whole school events, community events and outdoor learning...’ p.55

Schools ‘...need **to ensure participation** and achievement of all learners... need to respond positively to diversity and difference...’ p.88

‘...**Learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties** should, as far as possible, **be expected to participate...**’ p.34

THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE INTERVIEW ABOUT THIS THEME

### Learning

the change necessitated a shift ‘...to a curriculum **that allows every learner to develop understandings** and skills according to his or her ability...’ p.24

‘...At present, there is varying capacity to differentiate the **learning experiences at school level to ensure inclusivity...**’ p.13

‘...The pedagogical thrust of the programmes of study in the various Learning Areas **will be experiential**, calling for a learner-centered approach... Teachers will be expected to make a pedagogical shift from the ‘knowledge-transmission’ mode, currently the norm, to a more ‘**active-learning**’ approach...’ p.14

‘...The textbooks must: be interactive; **be inclusive; accommodate all learning abilities ; be contextually relevant; incorporate real-life situations; contribute to the acquisition of Generic Skills; embed the values considered appropriate; develop the full range of cognitive skills; and use ‘assessment for learning...**’ p.14

‘...It is expected that the programmes of study will offer **a range of alternative learning scenarios**, so that learners **in locations with very different characteristics** can expect to **enjoy similar learning experiences**. They should achieve **the same learning outcomes** with resources from their own environments...’ p.28

The key learning outcomes (KLOs) ‘...**accommodate diversity in terms** of culture, values and beliefs, gender, **learning differences** and social background...’ p.34

‘...The lower secondary curriculum reform process emphasizes education for life, through which relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes can be acquired by learners. The **learning opportunities** offered will enable them to live in harmony with others and with their environment, and to prepare for adult life and making a living...’ p.17

‘...At lower secondary school level, the curriculum will **give opportunities for all learners to achieve** the outcomes of a core programme of study, within the constraints of individual ability. **All learners must have equal opportunity to acquire the knowledge, understandings, skills**, and values essential for a productive life after school. ...’ p.13

‘...The document aims to ensure that educators and schools plan and implement their learning and teaching programmes **to enable all learners to achieve the expected outcomes of the curriculum...**’ p.18

### From the interview

Mijingo said the old curriculum is not inclusive. It does not ‘...even start where the learner is, it starts from high level...If you started from where they know and take them slowly, allowing the time takers to take their time, they could learn...’

Nama mentioned that the old curriculum ‘...only goes with the higher achievers. **It has many barriers in place for the leaners** not to advance...’

Nama added that it is better to ‘...**maximize on what the person can do**, rather than maximizing on what he cannot do...’

### Learning Environment

To ensure the inclusion, participation and achievement of all learners, it is essential that ‘...**the school and classroom setting is safe and conducive** to effective learning...**Positive discipline is established in a class where there is a supportive atmosphere**, where the work is experienced by the learners as challenging and meaningful, and where learning is organized efficiently...’ p.89

‘...The environment in which learners learn, strongly affects how they learn, and what they learn. A clean, well planned, comfortable, **friendly and pleasant environment is more effective for learning than** a dirty, uncomfortable or unfriendly place with no plan or proper layout...’ p.95

The reformed curriculum emphasizes ‘...**the value of learning by sharing in groups, having group discussion and cooperation**...’ p.95

Schools need to move ‘...towards providing an environment **where cooperative learning, project-based learning, experiential learning in the real world**, and practical problem-solving are at the heart of the learner experience...’ p.46

THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE INTERVIEW ABOUT THIS THEME

### Assessment

The reformed curriculum ‘...requires a revised, skill-oriented approach **to assessment that will support learning and reward achievement at all levels**...’ p.15

In order to assess the achievements of all learners, the new approach will seek to ‘...using a **diversified range** of assessment techniques...’ p.15

The design of the assessment materials ‘...will support classroom learning in the new lower secondary curriculum and provide for the **assessment of and reporting on the achievements of all learners**, at any stage of the four year programme of study...’ p.15

The ‘...reform is an attempt to establish a curriculum and **an assessment structure that are appropriate for all learners, not just for the small minority** who will eventually proceed to Advanced level courses of study...’ p.16

The ‘...assessment framework will be designed to **provide opportunities for learners of varying abilities** to achieve appropriate performance levels...’ p.28

It ‘...is recognized internationally that, with universal access to education, learners entering secondary school have a very **wide range of levels of achievement...**’ p.89

The ‘...new **assessment structure is designed to be appropriate for all candidates**, whatever their level of achievement, offering them the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do rather than what they cannot...’ p.117

#### **From Interview**

Mijingo had this to say about assessment ‘...we want to move away from that. That you recognize what one can do rather than what one knows, and **do away with the pass or fail, because we have the time takers and the quick learners...**’

#### **Teaching materials**

Teachers will need to employ ‘... methodologies that provide variety in the teaching and learning process. If the **same methods and materials are applied for all**, the learning needs of many learners will not be met...’ p.89

To ensure participation, learning and achievement of all learners, it is essential that ‘...learning and teaching materials provide a positive representation **of all groups in society without stereotyping...**’ p.89

The ‘...textbooks must: be interactive; be inclusive; accommodate all learning abilities; be contextually relevant; incorporate real-life situations; contribute to the acquisition of Generic Skills; embed the values considered appropriate; develop the full range of cognitive skills; and use ‘assessment for learning...’ p.14

For successful curriculum implementation, it ‘...is essential that textbooks are provided to learners, teachers are properly oriented and re-trained and essential learning and **teaching materials are available in all schools...**’ p.16

THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE INTERVIEW ABOUT THIS THEME

The text under the above titles was condensed to the following categories:

- 1) Participation as a requirement addressing diversity
- 2) Inclusive, alternative ways of learning for all
- 3) Inclusive and safe learning environment
- 4) Teaching material addressing diversity without stereotypes
- 5) Assessment addressing all learners and their achievement

## **8.6 Ethical considerations**

Any attempt at conducting research raises a number of ethical issues. John W. Creswell, says these issues relate to all phases of the research process. Creswell (2009) lists a number of ethical issues to anticipate: Ethical issues in the research problem (it is important to identify a problem that will benefit individuals being studied, one that will be meaningful for others besides the researcher); ethical issues in the purpose and questions; ethical issues in data collection (do not put participants at risk, and respect vulnerable populations, develop an informed consent form for participants to sign before they engage in the research); ethical issues in data analysis and interpretation; ethical issues in writing and disseminating the research (Creswell, 2009, p.87-92). In living up to this, I bore some ethical considerations in mind. Firstly, I had to gain the consent of the interview respondents which I got after assuring them that their responses will be held in strictest confidence and that my objective was to learn from them about the reformed curriculum.

The second ethical consideration related to the maintenance of confidentiality during the research writing process. I believed it was important not to reveal a respondent's identity or position by giving details that might link them to this information. As a result, the short quotes or excerpts from the interview transcripts use pseudonyms of Mijingo and Nama.

## **9 RESEARCH RESULTS**

What follows in this section is the presentation of the main findings of the research under the categories listed above. The findings from the curriculum framework document and the interviews are presented in reference to the various national and international commitments to education in general and inclusive education in particular. Quotations from the curriculum framework document and interviews are presented verbatim. The idea of inclusion emphasizes the removal of obstacles in the way of positive child outcomes especially in education. I show how the commitment to remove obstacles under the above themes is discussed in my research material.

### **9.1 Participation as a requirement addressing diversity**

Participation in general terms means the involvement of learners in school activities or events. Uganda's legal and policy environment is full of laws and policy pronouncements about equality of participation in all spheres of life. The 1995 constitution, article 30 spells out the right to education to all children as well as to adults. Other laws and policies put in place also emphasize this obligation. The Children's Act is emphatic on the right of all children in different situations, including the ones with disabilities. The Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy 2011 is another one which seeks to increase enrolment, participation and completion of schooling by persons with special learning needs. It strengthens and systematizes existing initiatives/programs on special needs education and inclusive education. The Non-Formal Education Policy 2011, is meant to address the inclusion of children out of school, who are often excluded because of the rigidity of the formal school system. These and others mentioned earlier are meant to increase the participation of people who need education to take part in the school system. To follow up on these laws and ensure that they are not violated, the parliament of Uganda established the Equal opportunities Commission to hear complaints of discrimination and marginalization of individuals and groups and to order redress for these groups.

The global documents discuss inclusive education extensively. UNESCO (2009) states that participation of all learners, from all stations of life should be an essential concern of all stake holders in education. Participation of all students (called learners in the Curriculum Framework Document) is an important element of inclusion. All learners should be able to

take part in learning opportunities since the ultimate goal of inclusion in education is concerned with an individual's effective participation in society and of reaching his/her full potential. An inclusive school must offer possibilities and opportunities for a range of individual treatment to ensure that no child is excluded from companionship and participation in the school. This implies the development of rights-based, child-friendly schools. A rights-based education helps children realize their rights. It is not only academically effective but also inclusive, healthy and protective of all children, gender responsive, and encourages the participation of the learners themselves, their families and their communities. Support from the teachers and head teachers is essential, but support from the communities close to the school is also vital. All must be able and willing to ensure inclusion in the classroom and in learning for all children regardless of their differences. The teachers should ensure that the teaching is inclusive, protective, gender responsive and encouraging of the participation of the learners themselves (UNESCO, 2009, p.6, 16, 21).

The UN sustainable Development Goal 4, and some of its sub goals implicitly and explicitly talk about participation of all:

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access at all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including those with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations (UN, 2015, p.17).

The curriculum framework document talks about participation of different learners, of all abilities, be they the average, the lower ability ones, and the above-average learners and in “...locations with very different characteristics can expect to enjoy similar learning experiences...” In another place the curriculum states that “...Learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties should, as far as possible, be expected to participate. Special provisions should be provided for them where necessary. There should be mechanisms for the early diagnosis of learning difficulties...”

The curriculum framework document also states that “...*the inclusive nature of the curriculum means that learners with disabilities should, as far as possible, be able to participate in the normal education system, or that special provision should be made for them...*” These provisions in relation to people with disabilities are in agreement with many national and international recommendations about people with disabilities. The Children Act, Chapter 59 of Uganda, for example, implores government to take steps to see that those children are assessed as early as possible to determine the extent and nature of their disabilities, to afford facilities for their rehabilitation, appropriate treatment and equal opportunities to education. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education continues to be a major international policy document on policies and strategies needed to include children with disabilities in the education system: it provides guidelines for children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. Among other things, it points out the need for people with expertise to screen and identify children with disabilities early to enable the children take part in regular classrooms or schools. Special schools or units within inclusive schools may continue to provide the most suitable education for the relatively small number of children with disabilities who cannot be adequately served in regular classrooms or schools. Special efforts should be made to encourage the participation of girls and women with disabilities in educational programmes (UNESCO, 1994, p.12, 14).

Elsewhere in the Curriculum Framework Document, it is written that the curriculum is made to ensure “...*the inclusion, participation and achievement of all learners and in order to ensure the inclusion of all learners, it is necessary for schools to identify the barriers that may lead to exclusion, and then reduce these barriers...*” The Curriculum Document, therefore, appears to indicate that all learners generally will be supported to participate in education and “...*teachers are also expected to ensure that girls and boys have equal access to all aspects of education...*”

## **9.2 Inclusive, alternative ways of learning for all**

A common challenge in both developed and developing regions is how to attain high-quality equitable education for all learners (UNESCO, 2009, p.7). EFA goals 3 and 6 explicitly mention inclusive learning for all:

### *Goal 3*

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;

### *Goal 6*

Improving all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Education for sustainable development which is goal 4, also has in its sub goals an element of learning for all. The UN general assembly that adopted goal 4 called on all governments to ensure that by 2030, all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes, to substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship and ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030 (UN, 2015, p.17).

One of the rationales for the reform of the lower secondary school curriculum is a need for a radical shift within the secondary education sub-sector. The shift implies a move from a curriculum that was initially designed for an elite minority of learners bound for positions within the public service, to a curriculum that allows every learner to develop understandings and skills according to his or her ability.

In the new lower secondary curriculum of Uganda, learning is centered on eight learning areas: Creative Arts, Languages, Life Education, Mathematics, Religious Education, Science, Social Studies, Technology and Enterprise. The thrust of the programmes of study in the various Learning areas will be experiential, calling for a learner-centered approach, appropriate to the demands of resource constraints, and high learner/teacher ratios. There are key learning outcomes (KLO), which all learners will be expected to achieve, albeit to different levels of attainment. The lower secondary school population is characterized by a wide range of abilities. The Curriculum Framework says it is cognizant of this and the special needs of all learners. “...*The curriculum framework and the KLOs recognize and value the different intelligences, knowledge and experiences of different learners. They accommodate*

*diversity in terms of culture, values and beliefs, gender, learning differences and social background. Learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties should, as far as possible, be expected to participate. Special provisions should be provided for them where necessary...*

The point about ensuring that children with disabilities or learning difficulties also learn is instructive since even the Salamanca Statement also mentions out that relatively few children with disabilities have had access to education, especially in the developing regions of the world, and that there are millions of adults with disabilities who lack even the rudiments of a basic education (UNESCO, 1994, p.13). In another place the Curriculum Framework says that the curriculum approach must take into account the multiple intentions of learners when they leave school. *“...The opportunity must be provided for all learners to achieve in all Learning Areas to their full potential. This includes learners who leave school, either before the end of the four-year cycle, or at the end of it. Learners who leave school and return to work in their own community have as great a need for a good, appropriate education as those who may eventually continue to study further...”*

Responding to the question of learning and learners and barriers in the old curriculum compared to the new one, the interviewees gave a lot of information. Mijingo said that the old curriculum is not inclusive. It does not *“...even start where the learner is, it starts from high level...”* It excludes many people and when some of them come to school, they *“...cannot grasp what you are talking about, in a year, they are discouraged and they are pushed away. Yet they have the ability. If you started from where they know and take them slowly, allowing the time takers to take their time, they could learn...”* Echoing Mijingo’s feelings is Nama, who said that the old curriculum is very exclusive and it *“...only goes with the higher achievers. It has many barriers in place for the learners not to advance...”* Mijingo emphasizes that a person needs to be given the opportunity to learn according to their ability and do what they are able to do and build on that *“...maximize on what the person can do, rather than maximizing on what he cannot do...”* Other measures that will ensure that all learners continue participating in the learning experiences according to Mijingo, is to ensure that the “time takers” are supported to complete the tasks given to them. One way to achieve that Mijingo points out is putting strategies in place that will be used to support the ‘time takers’ in the learning process.

Speaking about student-centered learning, a “challenge confronting the inclusive school” (Salamanca Statement, p.6), Mijingo talked of the need to engage learners, of the expectation

of the teachers to make a pedagogical shift from the ‘knowledge-transmission’ mode, currently the norm, to a more ‘active-learning’ approach. In relation to this Mijingo said that previously “...*the students could sit from 8 am to 5pm, without saying anything in class. All these were indications of not helping the learners to acquire knowledge and skills...*”

The two interviewees, Mijingo and Nama explained that the main ideas embedded in the reformed curriculum make it possible to ensure inclusion, and learning what is relevant by all learners, which makes it better than the old curriculum. Mijingo among other things pointed out that the new curriculum is in sync with the Uganda education philosophy of ‘a holistic education for person and national development’. Mijingo emphasized that ‘...*we want learners this time to be able to live effectively many years after school, contributing effectively to their personal and national development...*’ Mijingo also commented that the reduction of the subject load to only eight learning areas, reflects real life and thus sets it apart from the old curriculum. The reduction of this subject load will lead to acquisition of skills needed ‘...*for the 21st century citizens such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication. In short the generic skills...*’ Mijingo added that it is ‘...*practical oriented. Rather than having the teacher to talk from morning to sunset to passive learners, listening and taking notes...*’ Nama also thinks the new curriculum is better than the old curriculum which ‘...*had no time for creativity....competence based learning that is in line with skilling Uganda is needed...*’

What the curriculum framework document and the interviewees suggest seems to be in agreement with what the various international conventions, declarations and recommendations advocate for. They call for the learning needs of all learners to be accommodated and learner-centered pedagogies. The World Declaration on Education for All (1990), set the ball rolling and proclaimed that education should be provided to all. This declaration which is emphatic about this necessity, further stipulated that these needs consist of both basic learning tools and basic learning content required by all human beings to be able to survive, develop their full capacities, live and work in dignity, participate fully in development, improve the quality of their lives, make informed decisions and continue learning. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005 stresses that learning should be based on the clear understanding that learners are individuals with diverse characteristics and backgrounds, and the strategies to improve quality should therefore draw on learners’ knowledge and strength. From this perspective, the report suggests five dimensions to influence the teaching and learning processes in order to understand, monitor and improve the quality of education: (1)

learner characteristics; (2) contexts; (3) enabling inputs; (4) teaching and learning; and (5) outcomes. These dimensions are interrelated and interdependent and need to be addressed in an integrated manner (UNESCO, 2009, p.10).

The need to make student-centered learning part of education is also mentioned in other international documents. The challenge confronting the inclusive school is that of developing a child-centered pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities (UNESCO, 1994, p.6). The Salamanca Statement comments further on student-centered pedagogies:

“...A child-centered pedagogy is beneficial to all students and, as a consequence, to society as a whole. Experience has demonstrated that it can substantially reduce the drop-out and repetition that are so much a part of many education systems while ensuring higher average levels of achievement. A child-centered pedagogy can help to avoid the waste of resources and the shattering of hopes that is all too frequently a consequence of poor quality instruction and a ‘one size fits all’ mentality towards education. Child-centered schools are, moreover, the training ground for a people-oriented society that respects both the differences and the dignity of all human beings...” (p.6).

A child-centered curriculum is characterized by a move away from rote learning and towards greater emphasis on hands-on, experience-based, active and cooperative learning. When developing policies, the schools should be prepared to undertake changes that are necessary to make schools inclusive and capable of providing quality education that enables all students to achieve good learning outcomes, and the articulation of strategies to achieve this (UNESCO, 2009, p.20; UNESCO, 2008, p.23).

### **9.3 Inclusive and safe learning environment**

The context of environment here is restricted to the learning environment in which learners learn. The importance of learning environment is discussed in a number of global documents. UNESCO (2009) says responsive, child-friendly environments can actively be used to promote inclusion. Traditional views emphasized that the source of difficulties in learning comes from within the learner and ignored the environmental influences on learning. It is now strongly argued that reorganizing ordinary schools within the community, through school improvement and a focus on quality, ensures that all children can learn effectively, including those categorized as having special needs (UNESCO, 2009, p.14). A school environment with safe water and sanitation, good nutrition, health services, environment

friendly, and other amenities can give children a sense of normalcy. Every child should be happy to go to school every morning (Global Education First, 2012, p.14-17).

The Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework Document has a section talking about the learning environment. It emphasizes that schools should provide an environment in which the development of understanding, skills and values are seen as an integrated and continuous process. The Framework points out that the students' learning environment “...*strongly affects how they learn, and what they learn. A clean, well planned, comfortable, friendly and pleasant environment is more effective for learning than a dirty, uncomfortable or unfriendly place with no plan or proper layout...*” The lower secondary curriculum framework discusses factors to consider to ensure a good learning environment:

### *1. Cleanliness*

When classrooms are dirty, with rubbish on the floor, paint peeling off the walls, unclean windows and with no proper plan for the furniture, we cannot talk about a healthy learning environment. Such conditions are not conducive for learning. Even if the facilities are poor, they can be kept clean.

### *2. Furniture*

Classroom furniture needs to enable learners to work comfortably and should have a solid surface on which to write and draw.

### *3. Arrangement of furniture*

The reformed curriculum emphasizes the value of learning by sharing in groups, having group discussion and cooperation. Where possible, desks and chairs should be arranged in groups or circles rather than in rows facing one way. Learners need to face each other. You cannot discuss or argue with someone's back.

### *4. Use of classroom walls*

Classroom walls can be used for pictures, photographs, charts, maps and diagrams. These can be bought, made by the teacher, or they can be the products of learners' work. A good

idea, which costs nothing, is a wall newspaper, in which learners write things about themselves, stories, events in the school or local area, scientific experiments they have done, accounts of sports activities like soccer or netball matches, or produce art work. These are then pinned or stuck on the wall. They become things learners can learn from. It is a way of sharing learning. If there is no wall space, things can be hung upon a wire across the classroom.

#### *5. Ownership of the classroom*

A particular group of learners should “own” the classroom and feel it belongs to them. Learners should feel pride in the classroom and want to keep it clean and tidy. This should be the class which most often sits in that room. Competitions can be organized at intervals, for the best kept classroom.

#### *6. School environment*

The whole school environment contributes to learning. The environment should be kept clean with grass cut, flowers and trees planted and rubbish bins for waste disposal.

#### *7. Toilets*

These are often a problem in schools if they are not cleaned regularly. It is not easy to learn happily if the school environment smells or if people avoid going to a toilet because it smells.

#### *8. Kitchen, dining hall and dormitories*

In a boarding school the kitchen and dining hall must be kept clean for similar reasons. The curriculum document says that in order to implement the reformed curriculum, the challenge will be to transform current classroom conditions into learning environments where these sorts of activities and approaches are practiced.

Various international recommendations also mention the importance of safe and healthy learning environments, welcoming to everyone. Talking about promoting inclusion and environmental influences in general terms, UNESCO (2009), also includes the learning environment and points out that to cope with new demands in education structures and govern-

ance, which includes promoting inclusion, requires stimulating discussion, encouraging positive attitudes. It involves improving inputs, processes and environments to foster learning both at the level of the learner in his/her learning environment and at the system level to support the entire learning experience (UNESCO, 2009, p.7). To promote inclusion for all, it is also necessary to make changes to the school system to ensure that children not only have access to, but are welcomed in schools where diversity is expected and valued, and their needs are met in appropriate, flexible teaching and learning environments.

A welcoming school environment to all can be a good step in achieving the fifth EFA goal of full gender equality in education: a schooling environment that is free of discrimination and provides equal opportunities for boys and girls to realize their potential. Other starting points towards gender equality include making sure the school environment is safe, improving facilities to provide, for example, separate latrines for girls and boys, and training teachers in gender sensitivity (UNESCO, 2008, p.4; UNESCO, 2014, p.91).

#### **9.4 Teaching material addressing diversity without stereotypes**

The importance of teaching material in ensuring inclusion and that learners acquire the skills enumerated and achieve the Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs) is vital. The textbooks and/or resource materials will be vehicles for this. The lower secondary curriculum says this will be done “through careful development”. The document states that the reformed Lower Secondary Curriculum will be delivered using textbooks which have been developed, designed and produced to achieve the intentions of the reform. The textbooks, must be interactive, inclusive, accommodate all learning abilities; develop the full range of cognitive skills.

The above claims appear to be in line with international recommendations aimed at achieving the EFA goals. Accessible and flexible curricula, textbooks and appropriate learning materials can serve as the key to creating schools for all. In designing programmes, it is recommended that certain things are put into consideration like, ensuring that learning materials and teaching methods are well adapted to different age groups (children, youth and adults) and relevant to the lives of youth and adults. Another thing to consider is whether the materials cater for the needs of all learners with learning difficulties (visually impaired, hearing impaired, and other difficulties) (UNESCO, 2009, p. 19, 21).

Another component that is vital to be aware of in meeting the right of education to all and which ignored could undermine the inclusion of all is the responsiveness to cultures and traditions. Elimination of stereotypes, prejudices is essential and, therefore, ensuring that textbooks and other educational materials provide a fair, accurate and informative portrayal of the societies and cultures of different people (Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989) as cited in UNESCO, 2009, p.29).

### **9.5 Assessment addressing all learners and their achievement**

Appropriate forms of curriculum and assessment are important to create the necessary context for the development of inclusion (UNESCO, 2009, p.18). The UN secretary General Ban Ki moon also calls for effective systems to evaluate the performance of students. He suggests that education systems need to move away from testing systems bent on eliminating students who cannot progress to the next level to systems which identify ways to help students improve their learning (Global Education First, 2012, p.19).

This appears to be the intension of the lower secondary curriculum reform. The Lower Secondary School Curriculum Framework Document says that “...*assessment framework will be designed to provide opportunities for learners of varying abilities to achieve appropriate performance levels...*”

The Curriculum Framework Document claims that there is a national consensus on the need for reform of the lower secondary curriculum and the associated assessment structure, for two major concerns:

First, in the past the education system was too focused on rote learning and knowledge retention. This focus was exacerbated by the formal, academic nature of the ‘O’ level examinations taken at the end of Senior 4. Learners were unable to use their classroom knowledge effectively, or to apply it to solve problems in novel situations. Second, the curriculum and its associated assessment regime were primarily designed to meet the *needs of the small minority of learners* who would proceed to higher levels of education. The curriculum framework goes on to say that little attention was paid to those who would leave school after completing their lower secondary education. These learners, who form the great majority of the school population, were branded as ‘failures’ and were left with very limited opportunities.

The changing educational landscape necessitates the reformation of the assessment structure to support the new curriculum, with instruments that focus on the learner's skills and understanding, not just on their ability to recall facts and techniques with little understanding of why these work or how they may be applied to solve problems. The successful implementation of the Universal Secondary Education Policy requires a revised, skill-oriented approach to assessment that *“will support learning and reward achievement at all levels”* This will be criterion-referenced to ensure that standards can be maintained year by year.

Assessment of the new curriculum is based on the principle of outcomes-based education. One key aspect of this is the idea that whenever learners answer a question or draw a picture or write a few sentences, they are demonstrating something that they can do. They are showing evidence of achievement of a learning outcome. The point is not whether they succeed or fail in meeting the teacher's (or their own) expectations. In demonstrating their achievement level they are showing what they can do, and they are indicating what they should do next in order to make further progress. Thus one function of formative assessment may be diagnostic: it enables the teacher to identify those learners who need further assistance to develop a full, accurate understanding of the concepts being studied. Particularly important are the key purposes of *“providing information to teachers to help them to improve instruction and enhance learning”*, and of *“providing feedback to learners to enable them to participate in decisions and plans to ensure their continuous progress”* The assessment, the curriculum says will be criterion-referenced. The scoring rubric does not produce a score based on ‘right/wrong’ marking. Rather, it makes use of a set of criteria which describe five levels of performance. The criterion for each level is expressed in terms of what the learner can do. The criterion for the next level up indicates what they cannot do yet but may do next – how they may be helped to progress.

Based on the new curriculum, there will be a greater use of informal, formative assessment and a reduction in the number of formal summative tests carried out in schools. It is essential that the new end-of-cycle examination is designed to allow all learners to achieve a grade, whether a high one or a low one, and that all grades can be awarded reliably. That indicates that all the examinations must be accessible to all candidates and to differentiate effectively between them.

One of the interviewees, Mijingo also talked of the need of an assessment that helps all learners to advance. He said that a new way of assessment that recognizes and rewards each achievement is one of the main ideas on which the new curriculum is built. Mijingo added that the old curriculum used the pass or fail method of assessment. “...*we want to move away from that. That you recognize what one can do rather than what one knows, and do away with the pass or fail, because we have the time takers and the quick learners...*”

What is written and said about the reformed curriculum suggests the assessment standards are aimed at promoting equity, applying to all students regardless of their location, ethnicity, disability status or English language proficiency and other status. UNESCO’s International Bureau of Education along with UNESCO Headquarters, among other concerned parties in preparation of the 48th International Conference on Education (ICE) on inclusive education, identified for policy makers curricular changes as necessary in order to support flexible learning and assessment (UNESCO, 2009, p.17).

The 2013/4 EFA global monitoring report gives troubling statistics that call for strengthening of national assessment systems. With 250 million children not learning the basics, it is vital for a global post-2015 goal to be set which will monitor whether, by 2030, all children and youth, regardless of their circumstances, acquire foundation skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Meeting this need requires countries to strengthen their national assessment systems and ensure that they are used to inform policy. Many national assessment systems are lacking in this respect. Governments often consider their public examination system as equivalent to a national assessment system, even though it is mainly used to promote students between levels of education. National assessments should form a diagnostic tool that can establish whether students achieve the learning standards expected by a particular age or grade, and how this achievement changes over time for subgroups of the population. To improve learning for all children, teachers need the support of curriculum and assessment strategies that can reduce disparities in school achievement and offer all children and young people the opportunity to acquire vital transferable skills. Such strategies need to build strong foundation skills by starting early, moving at the right pace, enabling disadvantaged pupils to catch up, meeting the language needs of ethnic minorities and building a culture of reading. Classroom-based assessment tools can help teachers identify, monitor and support learners at risk of low achievement (UNESCO, 2014, p.6, 33-34).

Assessment approaches that promote a development towards inclusion need to be elaborated. All pupils should be entitled to be involved in all assessment procedures as long as they are relevant and adapted to accommodate their needs. Legal definitions and subsequent assessment procedures based on medical/deficit approaches lead to labelling and categorization that often reinforces segregation and separate approaches to provision (UNESCO, 2009, p.22).

## 10 DISCUSSION

In this research the main focus was to examine how the new Ugandan curriculum and two expert interviewees address the issue of inclusion. The themes of participation as a requirement addressing diversity; inclusive, alternative ways of learning for all; inclusive and safe learning environment; teaching material addressing diversity without stereotypes; and assessment addressing all learners and their achievement that emerged from the lower secondary curriculum framework. The curriculum and interviews are discussed, vis-à-vis the EFA global education movement and the Sustainable Development goals (SDGs). Uganda's, historical, socioeconomic and political context also provides the background for the discussion of the findings.

### 10.1 Participation and diversity

In the early part of the 20th century and the period before Uganda's independence, education was highly selective and discriminative, mainly confined to bible studies for the natives and academic type of education exclusively for Asian and European children. The years that followed independence saw an increase of native Ugandans in the participation of education. Participation of all people that need education is among the many aspects of education in general and inclusive education in particular. We cannot talk about inclusive education when children and other people that might benefit from education are not encouraged to participate. Participation by all learners in education is an important aspect as a number of local, regional and global documents show. The Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework Document of Uganda joins all the others in talking about the participation of all students by ensuring "*the inclusion, participation and achievement of all learners*", and it states that all barriers in the way of inclusion should be identified and reduced. The curriculum framework talks in general terms about the participation of all learners, irrespective of their condition, which is an important first step in the promotion of inclusive education.

In my view, to physically 'be there' in the sphere of education, should be the lowest level of inclusion. The mere fact of being present could maybe have positive influences on learners, for example, the cultivation of positive attitudes, such as acceptance of differences, friendships, even before other educational outcomes are considered. Participation, thus deserves more attention when implementing inclusive education. I would compare participation in education to participating in the Olympic Games where all competitors are given the same

platform. Just as the French educationalist and historian quoted as the father of the Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, said “The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well.” This could be looked at differently, but one of the things that I take away from that is the need to first take part and then “fight well”. Therefore, let everyone participate in education, including the slowest learners and then during the process of learning, given the same platform, they can strive to attain the skills they need. It is true that at the end of the day learners taking part achieve differently because of various social, economic and other factors, but at least as long as one important element of participation is encouraged, then there is a possibility that other objectives of inclusive education can develop alongside it, depending on how they are supported and treated. Getting every child to school is even one of the building blocks of the Global Education First Initiative - an initiative of the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon. ‘Getting children into school is a first step...put every child in school’ (Global Education First, 2012, p.6, 14).

Since 1997, when the Uganda government introduced Universal Primary Education, the goal was to increase enrolment to primary Education for all children in fulfilment of Goal 2 of UNESCO’s EFA. The abolition of fees, which was done when the Uganda government introduced the UPE program according to UNESCO, increased the likelihood of students enrolling in school, increased enrolment of disadvantaged groups such as girls and orphans, reduced delayed entry into schooling, incentivized enrolment and reduced dropout, particularly for girls and for children in rural areas in Uganda and several other countries surveyed (UNESCO, 2015, p.87-88). This strategic step seemed to have worked and attendance figures increased tremendously. Looking at how the government increased the participation rates at the primary level, it is thus important that the government also encourages the participation of students at the secondary level. To this end, the government came up with the Strategic Plan for Universal Secondary Education in Uganda 2009-2018, to increase and improve equitable access to quality secondary education for the large inflows from the primary level. However, this is not to say that only the bells of participation should be rung without paying attention to the need for classrooms where a reasonable number of learners will sit and other issues such as quality. Providing adequate infrastructure is to avoid the repeat of stories of overwhelming numbers of primary students who turned up with no room to accommodate them.

Although the Uganda government has tried to expand education which has increased the participation of students in education, provisions must be made for an enabling environment so that other aspects of inclusive education could be achieved. Participation is only a small cog and although it is commendable, it has to go hand in hand with other aspects of inclusion.

## **10.2 An Inclusive and safe learning environment**

The Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework Document identifies the learning environment as an important aspect in the achievement of the goals of the reformed curriculum and says that “*schools should provide an environment in which the development of understanding, skills and values are seen as an integrated and continuous process*” This statement bears testament to the importance of the learning environment. The learning environment can have huge influence on the success of all the aspects of inclusive education, including the ones identified in the curriculum framework document. The Curriculum Framework Document talks about the general cleanliness of the classrooms, the cleanliness of the outside of the classrooms, the arrangement of the furniture in the classrooms to enable the learners work comfortably, cleanliness of the kitchen, dining hall and dormitories in boarding schools and cleanliness of the toilets.

It is significant to talk about cleanliness for it is of vital importance for an inclusive and inviting environment. However, there are things they could have included and are not mentioned in the new curriculum. For example, the document talks about the keeping of toilets clean which is a good thing, but it should have pointed out the idea of boys and girls having separate toilets. It is not enough that toilets are clean, the toilets should be separated for dignity and safety. Sanitation is one of the issues that has been cited as contributing to affecting the participation and learning of students. One initiative that is coordinated by UNICEF is called WASH in schools, a program that calls on decision-makers to increase investments so that all children go to a school with child-friendly water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. In one of its reports released in 2010, UNICEF calls on policymakers, school administrators, communities and parents to work towards that goal. The report talks in detail about the importance of WASH in schools (Water, sanitation and hygiene education in schools). WASH in Schools provides safe drinking water, improves sanitation facilities and promotes lifelong health. WASH in Schools enhances the well-being of children and their families, and paves the way for new generations of healthy children. The report claims

WASH in Schools provides school environments that can protect children from health hazards, abuse and exclusion. It helps ensure quality education, because children who are healthy and well-nourished can fully participate in schooling and gain its maximum benefits. Quality education, in turn, leads to better health and nutrition outcomes, especially for girls. The evidence is clear that WASH in Schools can have a positive impact on enrolment levels, ratios of girls to boys attending school, quality of education and achievement.

The point of having separate toilets for both boys and girls is particularly crucial for girls. Girls are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of school, partly because many are reluctant to continue their schooling when toilets and washing facilities are not private, not safe or simply not available. Separate toilets can also ensure safety. A survey conducted in South Africa reveals that more than 30 per cent of the girls attending school had been raped at school. Many of the rapes occurred in school toilets, particularly those that are isolated from the protective environment of the school (UNICEF et al., 2010, p.4, 9-11). The Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework falls short on that important aspect of a good learning environment which could have been pointed out. Then there is also the accessibility of the toilets and other sanitation facilities by people with disabilities. Inclusion can only be a reality when all groups of people are thought of.

The Lower Secondary School Curriculum Framework Document does not mention several important elements of a good learning environment. As pointed out earlier, the document talks in general terms only about the physical environment in and outside the classroom. What about the social environment? This is important for the inclusion of everybody in education. Many things go on as learners interact and exclusion of bullying is one example of mentally healthy environment. When I was in secondary school, back in the 1990s, bullying was considered a 'normal' thing and maybe part of the school culture. Many of the new entrants to secondary school experienced bullying at the hands of the bigger or more "mature" students. These days talk of bullying in Ugandan schools could easily be dismissed, but it still does exist. Back then bullying was subjected to almost every weaker or small child, irrespective of your social or economic status. It was a kind of initiation into the school. That kind of bullying is now highly prohibited in schools and attracts a suspension from school. But still there are other causes of bullying in schools which could be among students themselves or from teachers and it should be eliminated. There are reports of older girls, for example, leaving school because they are made fun of by fellow learners. Some teachers are also found of making insensitive comments which could end up driving students

from schools. The need to change attitudes of students will go a long way in addressing this problem. The teachers should always interfere whenever such instances happen and also endeavor to educate those students with this negative attitude. The teachers themselves should always be reminded of their responsibility of creating a good learning environment for all learners. The values of respect and tolerance of difference embedded in the new curriculum should be adhered to by the teachers as well as the students. The social environment thus is as important as the physical one and the Lower Secondary School Curriculum Framework Document does not mention anything about it.

### **10.3 Learning and assessing students on various outcomes**

The aspect of participation in the inclusive education practices is an important one, but not sufficient for the whole scope of inclusion. Participation can have short term and long term benefits and one of the long term benefits is learning, in this case in a school situation. Learning can lead to acquiring of new skills, knowledge and values. This is the main intention of the new lower secondary curriculum. The Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework Document mentions the need for all learners to learn. This is significant if I compare it with schooling in the narrow sense. Schooling is an often extrinsically motivated process by, for example, parents, teachers, and rewards. Schooling also comes with conforming to many of the strict school rules and other guiding processes. It is also possible for students to attend schools and not learn at all. Learning on the other hand is usually self-motivated and can happen at varying degree depending on subject of study and interest of the learner. Of particular importance as far as the reformed curriculum of Uganda is concerned are the different attributes of the learners, for example, their learning pace, their backgrounds, to mention only two.

The Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework in the chapter, **How learners will learn**, suggests a number of strategies of making sure every one learns. The learning is expected to come from the eight learning areas, namely: Creative Arts Languages, Life Education, Mathematics, Religious Education, Science, Social studies, Technology and Enterprise. From these learning areas, the learners are expected to acquire understandings, skills and values. Specifically, about the skills, the learners are required to learn generic skills. These are the essential learning outcomes or general capabilities that learners are required to learn. The generic skills the curriculum document requires are the knowledge, skills and behaviors that

will assist young people to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century. These Generic Skills contribute to several of the Key Learning Outcomes - sense of identity and wellbeing, being connected with and contributing to their world, and having the confidence to be independent learners and effective communicators. The eight Generic Skills baskets contain a number of skills which are acquired and applied throughout the curriculum. They are: *Communication, Social and inter-personal skills, Creativity and innovation, Critical thinking and problem-solving, Learning to learn, Workplace behavior, Numeracy and Information and technology*. The Key Learning outcomes (KLOs), Values and Generic Skills underpin the reformed curriculum (Curriculum Framework Document, p.13, 46).

A number of ways are mentioned that are hoped to help the learners to learn. One of those is what the Curriculum Framework Document calls “learning for understanding”. Learning experiences should ensure that learners do not merely acquire knowledge. They must understand it. Learning experiences must, therefore, be motivating, their purpose must be clear to the learner and meaningful. Adopting learner centered pedagogies is one strategy that would aid in the understanding of what learners are learning. It is envisaged that learners will have the opportunity to show their own initiative, creativity and problem-solving skills. The learning experiences require them to consider, test and evaluate various approaches to achieving goals or solving problems. The learners are required to participate actively by doing and reflecting on their learning, not just passively listening to the teacher or copying notes. The learning experiences should develop learners’ ability to seek, use and evaluate information for a range of purposes (Curriculum Framework Document, p.91). It is assumed that if the learners are given time to learn both independently and from and with others, this could help them learn.

The interconnectedness of the eight learning areas is also pointed out as another measure that will help students learn. If the learners have the opportunity to connect the different learning areas that would be good for their learning. This signifies a move from the old curriculum which was not affording the learners this chance. The new approach also points out that it is essential that all learners understand. One way of ensuring that it is moving away from the traditional approach which the curriculum framework document terms as ‘banking education’. In banking education, the teacher regards the learners as empty buckets which should be filled with knowledge. The learners are then tested by being asked to reproduce the knowledge the teacher has given them. This method relies a lot on the learner listening to the teacher, copying notes from the board, learning them by rote, and reproducing

them later. This can even be done successfully without learners understanding what they are writing or reading. The new reform will move away from that to an approach concerned with learners achieving outcomes called problem-posing education. This presumes that the learners already have their own ideas, knowledge and skills based on previous experience in school or elsewhere. They should be encouraged to think of learning as an active process on their part. It involves a conscious intention to make sense of new ideas or experiences. This improves learners' own knowledge and capabilities, rather than simply expecting them to reproduce or remember. In the problem-solving approach, the job of the teacher, therefore, is to build on this existing knowledge and experience. The teacher poses problems to the learners. This makes them think about their own ideas and experiences, as well as adding new knowledge and skills to it. Learners are also exposed to reality outside the classroom.

The aspect of learners actively taking part in the learning process, rather than passively listening to the teacher, was also talked about by the respondents in the interviews I conducted. Mijingo, one of the interviewees said that the “...*time of interaction between the learner and the teacher should be effective instructional time...*” Mijingo and Nama both said that learners should be able to take part in the learning process and be able to practically carry out some of the procedures involved in the learning and with the support of teachers be assisted to “...*build their own learning, build their own concepts...have time for projects and research...*” The Curriculum Framework Document mentions some strategies to show how the learners will be able to understand and learn. This discussion about learning and how the learners at the lower secondary school level will learn demonstrates a departure from the narrow mission of training and curriculum provided by the Christian missionaries stressing British culture, history and geography in the early years of the 20th century and the majority of which still remained in the old curriculum. The old instruction in schools also never considered the imparting of skills, values and attitudes needed to thrive in society and real life.

The effort to change the old type of training also shows a positive stance towards a skills oriented education which past education and the old curriculum was not clear about. This is an important step considering the progressive movement in education going on around the world. Despite the call to reform education to meet the challenges of this century there are reports that project how education systems are failing to impart the basics. UNESCO says that the crisis in quality learning is evident. Despite increased enrolments, an estimated 250 million children cannot read, write or count well, whether they have been to school or not. Across the world, 200 million young people leave school without the skills they need to

thrive plus an estimated 775 million adults – 64 percent of whom are women – still lack the most basic reading and writing skills (UNESCO, 2013, p.2). One reason for this is that the quality of education provided does not enable the learners to acquire the core skills needed. As noted earlier, access to education is important and thanks to efforts by governments, many more children can now participate in education. But participation without regard to quality is an insufficient strategy and gains of universal participation in education are at risk of being ruined.

The failure to adequately educate students can be seen as a violation of the right to education as it limits economic development and locks countries into cycles of low growth rates, limited employment opportunities and weak social cohesion. One of the things that can be done to address this crisis, is improving the quality of education and this requires us to redefine what education systems are for. The skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that learning and teaching promote must reflect and respond to the needs and expectations of individuals, countries, the global population and the world of work today. They must not only teach basic skills like reading and math, but encourage critical thinking and foster the desire and capacity for lifelong learning that adapts to shifts in local, national and global dynamics (UNESCO, 2013, p.1, 4).

These recommendations and the strident tone used show that learning is a very vital element in the provision of education. The Uganda Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework Document on paper appears to show the desire to move towards that direction. The designers of that document know that there are many Ugandan students who go to schools, but are not learning. This has been highlighted by many reports. One example, are the reports that UWEZO (Uwezo is Swahili for ‘capability’) has been releasing since 2010. Uwezo is a five year initiative that aims to improve competencies in literacy and numeracy among children aged 6-16 years old in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The report UWEZO released in 2013 titled “*Are Our Children Learning? Literacy and Numeracy Across East Africa*” shows that many children across East Africa are not learning basic literacy and numeracy skills. Only two out of ten pupils (20 per cent) in the third year of primary school can read and do basic mathematics at Primary 2 level. By the time they reach the last year of primary school, one out of four East African children (24 per cent) still have not acquired these skills. Out of the 366 districts assessed, across East Africa, covering a random sample of nearly 150,000 households and 326,610 children aged six to 16 years in Kenya and Uganda, as well as chil-

dren aged seven to 16 years in Tanzania, Kampala which is Uganda's best-performing district comes 82nd on the list! The next best Ugandan district is Mbarara at 118, followed by Wakiso at 121 (Taremwa, 2015, para.4).

These reports are an indictment of the quality of education provided to children in the respective countries and even though these reports are for primary school children, they in a way reflect what is happening at the secondary level. From the interviews conducted this seems to be the case. Respondent Mijingo, commented on the survey conducted by National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) of Uganda, in February 2012, where 141 enterprises were asked about competencies needed in work across the country. This revealed the low skill levels of the secondary school graduates and was used to inform the development of the curriculum framework. The competencies were clustered into three groups:

- Time management, trainability, team player, task oriented and oral and written communication.
- Organizational skills, creativity, literacy and numeracy.
- Managerial, entrepreneurial, ICT and investigative skills (p.39).

Commenting about this survey, Mijingo, pointed out that only 50% of lower secondary graduates could effectively communicate orally and in written form. Similarly, the numeracy and arithmetic skills of these graduates are 'very low'. The number of lower secondary school graduates with sufficient numeracy skills was 30%. The number of those who could work interactively in a team stood at only 10% of the students. Therefore, what is put in the Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework to improve on the skill levels of the secondary school graduates to meet potential employers' skills criteria will perhaps help to improve on the skills of those graduates. This will however depend on putting what is written in the curriculum framework document into practice.

The measures mentioned in the new curriculum to ensure that all learners learn are in general targeted at all of them. The new curriculum points out that all learners will follow the same programme of study unlike in the past when some schools in Uganda used to have streaming of students according to their level of capability. This only served to stigmatize students of lower ability and resulted in high dropouts. This time, it is mentioned in the new curriculum that all efforts will be made to support all students to learn. This will come close to realization when teachers deeply understand what their learners are required to learn. In the intended curriculum it is mentioned that learning will be done by using strategies which ensure

intended learning outcomes are achieved. The new curriculum mentions that teachers and schools, will have to identify the barriers that may lead to exclusion, and then reduce these barriers, respond positively to diversity and difference and continually strive to meet the needs of all learners. This is a first step to ensuring learning in my view. The new curriculum points out that teachers will need to employ strategies for dealing with a diverse range of learning needs in the classroom. This will include methodologies that provide variety in the teaching and learning process. The Curriculum Framework Document says that if the same methods and materials are applied for all, the learning needs of many learners will not be met. How it will be possible for teachers to use different methods and materials for different groups of learners is however not explicitly mentioned in the curriculum framework document. This becomes even more intriguing in a situation where there is one teacher in charge of a big class of learners.

The measures proposed in the new curriculum have to be followed through in order for all the learning needs of all students to be met. We have seen proposals before on paper that have not seen the light of day. The issue of teacher training should be considered paramount for them to be able to address students' varied needs. There is need for them to transfer from the old way of doing things to the new approach and this will take in-service training covering the whole country. This training needs to prepare teachers on how to teach and support the learning of diverse pupils. The teachers also need to understand the principles on which the lower secondary curriculum is based. If no effort is made to help teachers appreciate these, then the curriculum will not help much. One of the respondents, Mijingo, pointed out that the government is continuing to engage all stakeholders including teachers, National Teachers Colleges (NTCs) and Universities in the process of curriculum reform. Mijingo added that starting 2016, a plan of retooling all teachers already in service and also to harmonize the teacher training program for those taking on teaching as a career, will be initiated. The Curriculum Framework Document also mentions the need for revolutionary changes that will include a re-training program so that teachers can acquaint themselves with new teaching methods, strategies, or class-management practices.

For all learners to learn something, it is a good idea that assessment based on various outcomes will be used. The generic skills and values that are at the core of the curriculum, will without doubt be attained in varying amounts. The old curriculum was rigid on the assessment side and benefited mostly the quick learners and these are the ones who benefited most

from an assessment of ‘passed or failed’ criteria. The others who did not proceed to university were considered ‘failures’ and they constituted the majority of pupils (only 15 % continue to university, according to Mijingo). The stereotyping of people who do not pass paper exams is common in the minds of some Ugandan people. The attempt by the reforms to move away from this sort of assessment through reforms needs to be supported. In my view and surely in the view of many others, it will be good for everyone if the strengths of everyone, including the less competent children, are identified and appropriately supported by the teachers to learn the core skills highlighted in the Curriculum Framework Document. And if the schools implement the proposal to provide each school leaver with a Generic Skills Passport, that would be even better. The Generic Skills Passport will constitute a formal report outlining students’ achievements, with a particular focus on the generic skills and the values and attitudes that underpin the whole of the reformed lower secondary curriculum. The generic skills passport will ensure that all school leavers, including those who leave formal education before the S4 Uganda Certificate of Lower Secondary Education (UCLSE) terminal examination, will have a formal record of their achievements during their period in lower secondary school (Curriculum framework document, 2013, p.16).

#### **10.4 Teaching material and diversity**

The teaching materials play an important role in inclusive education. The reformed lower secondary curriculum identifies this and calls them the vehicle that will deliver the Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs). The learning materials could help in keeping learners in school and also understanding of what is taught in schools. With the many ethnic groups, cultures and traditions in Uganda, there is need to be sensitive to this diversity by making sure the text books, worksheets and other written material, provide a fair, accurate and informative portrayal of the societies and cultures of the different Ugandan people. The tribal jokes that are common in comedy shows and other public places like social media should not be used in classrooms and in the learning material. One thing that Mijingo mentioned about the learning material is the outdated nature of many of the textbooks that are in use, many of them written many decades ago. In the old curriculum, learners are subjected to irrelevant content, which they cannot make meaning out of and which is not contributing to the skills basket needed in today’s labour market. Mijingo also pointed out that the textbooks are “...*high-pitched in terms of language not taking cognizant that English to Ugandans is either a third or fourth language. So you find learners being exposed to seven syllable words, yet their age*

*can accommodate two or three syllables, something that is not helping the learners...*” Language barrier is one exclusionary pressure that no doubt has to be tackled if all learners are to benefit.

There is mention in the Curriculum Framework Document of preliminary trial and revision of learning materials by the curriculum team to assess the scientific quality of the materials, their correspondence to recent developments in the Learning area domain, their accuracy, and their clarity. Judgment on these issues will usually be made by experts in the particular field of study. It is also necessary to assess the likelihood that learners will be able to learn from the materials, and acquire the skills and competencies aimed at in the programme of study. This implies examination of the existing cognitive and affective characteristics of the learners. If the program requires specific learning equipment, materials, or learning strategies, the feasibility of such features must be assessed (Curriculum Framework Document, p.125). From reading this section of the Curriculum Framework Document, you get the impression that efforts are being made to make the learning materials equally friendly to every learner (both from rural and urban areas), for a reasonable class size, easily usable by all teachers. What will matter at the end in my view is whether all the elements of inclusive practices are taken into account.

### **10.5 Challenges and conditions for inclusive reforms**

However, for all that to happen, there are some challenges which will have to be mitigated and the need to incentivize the learners and these have been identified by a number of reports on Education For All (EFA). Corruption is one such challenge faced by most countries, including Uganda. The Dakar Framework noted, *“Corruption is a major drain on the effective use of resources for education and should be drastically curbed.”* Numerous studies point to the negative correlation between corruption and the quality of public services, including education. Student dropout rates, for instance, were five times higher in countries with high levels of corruption than in countries with little or no corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 2006, as cited in UNESCO, 2015, p.253). There is also the need to tackle the problem of teacher absenteeism. Teacher absenteeism takes a toll on student learning by reducing the number of hours that children are actually taught. Estimates for 21 countries (including Uganda) for 2004–2011 indicate that the teacher absenteeism rate in primary education exceeded 20%.

The same reports allege that in Uganda, with primary teacher absenteeism of 27%, many teachers who were in the classroom were not actually teaching (Chaudhury et al., 2006, as cited in UNESCO, 2015, p.205-206). This is of great concern given that the aims of inclusive education will not be achieved with this kind of inappropriate behavior. The issue of teachers comes up for discussion every once in a while in Uganda. For example, at the time of elections, on the release of national examination results and whenever there is a strike by teachers. Teacher strikes in Uganda are not uncommon and one of the grievances is poor pay. Presumably, poor pay is one of the causes of teacher absenteeism in Uganda. The root cause of absenteeism, late arrival and skipping of classes by the teachers need to be tackled if what is envisioned in the reformed curriculum is to be achieved.

Poverty as identified in the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) report quoted in the section, **The Present economic, social and political situation**, of this thesis, is a huge problem for education results as well. Poverty cannot be eliminated, but at least the government of Uganda should work towards improving the economic situation of the many trapped in poverty. The quantitative side of the economy (GDP) is not enough when the qualitative side of the economy is not addressed. Positive increase in economic figures only becomes important if this is reflected in the lives of ordinary Ugandans. In Uganda as elsewhere, poverty is one thing that causes disparities in education. For example, poverty deepens gender disparities in primary education completion. In countries such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique and Uganda, where gender parity in primary attainment has been achieved since 2000 for the richest girls, the poorest girls still lag far behind the poorest boys (UNESCO, 2015, p.159). This could be a microcosm of the other levels of education, including secondary education. Learners from poor households are not able to get many of the basic necessities they need to attend education, things like uniforms and other scholastic materials and sanitary towels crucial for girls.

Other things that are shown to positively impact on the participation and learning of students and which should be maintained or put in place are; School feeding programmes and friendly health services. The provision of meals to learners by players such as World Food Program (WFP) has been shown to increase attendance and learning. One report by the World Bank titled '**From evidence to policy**', done by World Bank researchers together with the WFP, has evaluated the impact of school feeding and take-home rations programs. The evaluations found that when the food was distributed properly, as was the case in Burkina Faso and Uganda, enrollment rose and students did show some gains in learning. Also in Uganda,

where researchers were able to look at attendance – as opposed to just enrollment – they found significant increases in attendance for girls of all ages in schools that offered on-site meals and increases in attendance rates of older boys (ages 10-17) in schools that offered take-home rations. In both cases, attendance rose by between 8 and 12 percentage points (World Bank, 2012, p.1-2). The objectives of these initiatives in places like Karamoja (in the northeastern part of Uganda) that has experienced some food shortages is therefore to encourage children to enroll and attend class regularly, to prevent them from dropping out of school, to enable them learn more easily, and to assist the government in achieving its overall education objectives in the region. Furthermore, school meals have nutrition and economic benefits that carry on into the future. When school meals are combined with vitamin and mineral enrichment, they provide an opportunity for children who may be stunted when they enroll in Primary 1 to recover their potential in terms of body size and cognitive development. Later on, when these children grow up, they then have a better chance to participate in learning opportunities, to apply their knowledge, and to have good health and productive careers (Dunford, 2016, para.3). Research thus shows the benefits of providing meals to learners and the government should make sure that learners are able to get meals at schools, for the objectives of inclusive education to be met. Although the initiative by WFP is commendable, a national feeding program targeting the under saved people would be more sustainable. Reducing the poverty levels would also enable parents to pack lunch for their children.

The well intentioned Secondary Curriculum Framework which is meant to inculcate inclusive practices in the minds of teachers, educationalists, and others that would want an education system in Uganda that caters for all learners is a good starting point. It is hoped after the field trials that the implementation will resume in all secondary schools countrywide. But this process could be impeded if the practices from the government bureaucracy that negatively affect service delivery in the country are not addressed. For example, corruption as mentioned earlier is one such practice that will affect the good intention behind inclusive education. Because of corruption the learning environment, the teaching materials, remuneration of teachers is affected; corruption increases inequality. For this effort to bear fruit, it would be better if the things identified in the reports cited above are tackled, so that the ideas mentioned in the Framework Document work. This will not happen overnight, but as inclusive practices are a continuous process, so is the process of tackling the roadblocks in the way of inclusive education identified above.

The review of the concept of inclusive education from the lower secondary curriculum framework reveals some fascinating ideas about participation, the learning environment, learning, assessment and attainment of all learners. However, these ideas are stated in general terms. There is no detailed breakdown of the different groups that are at risk of getting excluded from education. The people with disabilities, the group most at risk of missing out on education are only mentioned in passing references without specific details, although it is mentioned that means on how their inclusion will be implemented will be developed later. The view of not providing exact details about the learners with disabilities appears to be echoed by one of the interviewees, Mijingo, when he points out that the “...needs of the majority of learners are catered for (including the mild disabilities)...but the extreme disabilities, like if you are deaf, we shall need an adaptation or somebody to support you as you learn”

Other aspects that touch upon diversity, such as culture, are all presented in a condensed way. I also find it surprising that refugees and asylum seekers are not mentioned at all. We only have to assume that all learners mean everybody, including vulnerable groups of people like refugees and asylum seekers. At the moment Uganda is home to almost 511,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, the highest number ever in the country's history. Uganda is the third-largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, after Ethiopia (736,000) and Kenya with 594,000 refugees (Yaxley, 2015, para.2). The curriculum framework document should have mentioned refugees and asylum seekers as the Sustainable Development Goal 4 points out the migrants among the groups that are supposed to get education.

Also the details of how the new curriculum teaches everyone are at this point not mentioned in the Lower Secondary School Curriculum Framework Document. My guess is that more likely, all these will be provided in the material that will be developed before the actual implementation is done. The success of the new curriculum (if it comes into force) will depend on practically carrying out what is written in that document.

Inclusive education is a theory, which to varying extent can be realized as a practice. It is a long time process contingent upon many factors. Inclusive education is an important aspect in the ongoing process of improving quality in the education sector. This research explores the concept of inclusive education and how it is mainly reflected in the Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework in Uganda. It can be said that the reformed curriculum framework designed by the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) in conjunction with

other players and the views from the respondents interviewed, point towards an inclusive education orientation in Uganda, even though in general terms. This is in some way in line with the EFA goals and the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which among other things call for the inclusive practices to be embedded in education systems worldwide. With this it is hoped that education will be extended to all the people of Uganda, irrespective of their status. The Curriculum Framework Document is however short on details of how all learners will have their needs met, providing only blanket statements which in a way undermines it. It is hoped that by identifying these gaps through this thesis, the short comings will be addressed in the actual process of implementation. The new curriculum will only become significant once the challenges that have bedeviled government programs are mitigated and the Uganda government plus the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports, get their act together. The Education sector in Uganda should surely strive to improve, otherwise this exercise might come to nothing. This candid conclusion is based on the report of the Uganda independent newspaper, The Daily Monitor. On March, 22, 2016, The Daily Monitor came out with a story “Best, worst performing ministries named” The paper shows the education sector as the second worst performer and also the second with insufficient data, in the 2015/16 Government Half Annual Performance Report launched at a Cabinet retreat in Kampala.

### **10.6 Validity and reliability**

Reliability and validity must be considered when evaluating this study. Putting these in consideration makes the research believable and trustworthy. According to Robson (2002, p.93, 170), validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be. It is something to do with a piece of qualitative research being accurate, or correct, or true. And reliability is considered as the consistency or stability of a measure; for example, if it were to be repeated, would the same result be obtained? Robson (2002, p.176) says that at a technical level, the general non-standardization of many methods of generating qualitative data precludes formal reliability testing. Nevertheless, there are common pitfalls in data collection and transcription, such as, equipment failure, interruptions, transcription. He says that in a more general sense, researchers using flexible designs do need to concern themselves seriously with the reliability of their methods and research practices. This is because of not only being thorough, careful and honest in carrying out the research, but also being able to show others that you have been. According to Gibbs, qualitative validity means that

the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects. He suggests several reliability procedures, such as checking the transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes made during the transcription (Gibbs, 2007 as cited in Creswell, 2009, p.190). Another way of achieving reliability is via keeping an audit trail. The notion is that you keep a full record of your activities while carrying out the study. This would include your raw data, transcripts of interviews, research journal, details of your coding and data analysis among other things (Robson, 2002, p.175). In meeting up with this recommendation that enhances reliability, I have kept an audit trail which includes interview transcripts some of whose excerpts I have reproduced verbatim in the presentation and analysis of the findings. I have also presented a table that shows how I came up with the themes of inclusive education from the data. The interview questions are also available in the appendix. I also carefully transcribed the interviews, recording exactly what the interviewees said in order to derive the themes from the interviews.

Validity is often one of the strengths of qualitative research and determines whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account. Multiple strategies are recommended which should enhance the researcher's ability to gauge the accuracy of the findings as well as convince readers of that accuracy. The strategies range from the most frequently used and easy to implement to those occasionally used and more difficult to implement (Creswell, 2009, p.191). One of the strategies is triangulation. There are basically four kinds of triangulation that contribute to verification and validation of qualitative analysis:

- 1) Data triangulation: the use of more than one method of data collection (for example, observation, interviews, documents).
- 2) Observer/analyst triangulation: using more than one observer in the study to review the findings.
- 3) Methodological triangulation: checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods.
- 4) Theory triangulation: using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data.

Other strategies recommended include; using rich, thick description to convey the findings; to acknowledge the researcher's bias; and also present discrepant information that runs counter to the themes; audit trail (Robson, 2002, p.175; Patton, 1990, p.464; Creswell, 2009, p.191-192). In this research, I have used the data triangulation method. This method involves the use of more than one data collection source. The information obtained through interviews corroborates what is in the Curriculum Framework Document.

To enhance validity and reliability, the onus is on the qualitative researcher to be methodical in reporting sufficient details of the data collection and the process of analysis to permit others to judge the quality of the resulting product (Patton, 1990, p.462). Although it is difficult (some would say impossible) to be sure about validity, it is possible to recognize situations and circumstance which make validity more likely (Robson, 2002, p.170).

### **10.7 Concluding words and further research**

Uganda has many challenges in its education reforms as demonstrated above. Inclusion is one of them as diversity is due to its history and characteristics. However, the country has shown willingness to meet these challenges which has been manifested in many material policy papers about school reforms, equity and inclusion. The reforms have been pushed forward by many international agendas and declarations about Education For All and sustainable development. One manifestation about the need of educational reforms is the new lower secondary school curriculum which has been analyzed in this research.

There are many possibilities to continue this research about inclusion in Uganda, for instance how the idea of inclusive education is implemented in practice at lower secondary school level, when the implementation starts. This could provide a baseline of determining the extent to which the education goals of the SDGs (which have a longer life span than EFA goals) are on course of attainment.

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## APPENDIX

### Interview Questions.

- 1) What has prompted the need for a new curriculum?
- 2) What are the main ideas on which the new curriculum is built on? How is it different from the old one?
- 3) Do you think that the needs of all learners are catered for in the new curriculum and how?
- 4) How will the new curriculum and instruction accommodate the full range of student diversity and learning styles?
- 5) Are the teachers informed about the new curriculum and are they being prepared to provide for a range of student's needs? How?