

REFORMING THE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION (UPE): DOES PERFORMANCE PAY FOR TEACHERS PROVIDE A LASTING SOLUTION?

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I. Introduction

Public services should be provided with an aim of being efficiently and equitably available to all citizens (Grout & Stevens, 2003). Governments therefore must intervene to ensure this effective delivery of services by managing key challenges faced as they implement. This analysis will focus on analysing the reforms undertaken by the Ugandan government in reforming the education sector to ensure quality basic education. Specifically focus will be on the primary level education implemented through the Universal Primary Education (UPE) under the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) (MoESTS, 2015) and how parliament as an arm of government can be instrumental in ensuring effective implementation of the reforms.

While the reform in the public education sector was meant to increase access, equity and efficiency through addressing the then existing market failures, it has been noted that the quality aspect is still lacking. The high rates of underperformance and poor quality education indicate a need for reforms in the sector. Therefore this analysis will expound on the levels of government challenges that have caused this kind of inefficiency and recommends a key reform for the sector. It recommends for the government to take on the performance pay reform for primary school teachers as a major contribution towards improving the primary level public education. The analysis makes a justification as to why of all levels of reform, performance pay for teachers could reform the sector and not any other aspect of reform. It further analyses the role parliament can play in ensuring that this reform is implemented through its constitutional mandate.

The analysis comes to a conclusion that despite the fact that implementing performance pay is likely to be met with challenges of mainly undermining the intrinsic values of the public servants, there is evidence that this reform contributes to delivery of efficient public services. Therefore, the Ugandan education sector is highly encouraged to undertake this reform as way of dealing with the government failures in the sector. Parliament should play a key role in amending

the Education Act, advocating for increased financing to the education sector and providing oversight for efficient delivery on the reform.

II. Public Services

A public service is a service that is highly public funded and largely free at point of delivery to the beneficiaries (Grout & Stevens, 2003). These are paid for collectively by all citizens either through taxation or any other compulsory payments deemed fit by government. Government's role in providing these services might be through production, financing or regulation of that particular service. Shaw (2010) believes that from an economic point of view, beyond mere being "good for the public"; a public service should benefit as many people as possible, including those who do not pay for it. Grout & Stevens (2003) indicate that public services should be provided with an aim of being equitably available to all citizens and efficiently.

Equity refers to a condition where citizens in need of a service have equal access in spite of their income, gender, location or any other characteristic that would render them disadvantaged (Stiglitz, 2000). Public services should also be provided with efficiency; with a high volume, lower costs and with good quality (Stiglitz, 2000). Education is one of the public services provided freely in most economies since it's aimed at being equitably and efficiently available to all citizens (Stiglitz, 2000; Shaw, 2015; Levin, 1987). The Ugandan education system is provided through four levels; pre-primary, primary, secondary and post- secondary or tertiary education (Uganda High Commission, 2009). This analysis will specifically focus on the primary level where free primary education is provided to all children in public schools under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) system.

III. Uganda's Education System: A Historical Perspective

Uganda's education history dates as far back as the 1880s when education was provided by the Christian missionaries with no government support (Syngellakis & Arudo, 2006; Ssekamwa, 2000; Ojijo, 2012). By the 1930s a few African elites decided to rebel against British colonialists and start their own schools to liberate their children from the colonial indoctrination and impart African values that gave birth to private schools' set up. During the period between 1924 -1962,

several commissions were set up to review the education policies and make recommendations (Ojijo, 2012). By the 1962 independence from colonial rule Uganda's education system was still not clearly defined until the birth of the 1964 Education Act of Uganda formulated from Professor Edgar Castle's 1963 Education Commission Report (Ssekamwa, 2000; Ojijo, 2012). From this report, it was decided that government takes over all the schools which gave birth to public school management system. The 1970s' civil wars didn't give much room for implementation of this policy given the manpower vacuum and the general political instability (Syngellakis & Arudo, 2006).

The 1986 post- conflict government under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) started with rehabilitation and reconstruction of the education system and facilities (Ojijo, 2012, Mbabazi, et, al, 2015; Black, et, al, 1999). The NRM government instituted the Prof. Senteza Kajubi Commission in 1987 that produced the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) which later led to the 1992 Government White Paper on Education (GWPE). The major aim of GWPE was to “to eradicate illiteracy and equip the individual with basic skills and knowledge to exploit the environment for self-development as well as national development, for better health, nutrition, and family life, and the capability for continued learning.” With GWPE government acknowledges the importance of education in the transformation of society hence embarked on providing free education for all at primary level. This was the beginning of the era of Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy. The government thus started implementing the UPE programme through the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) in 1998 (MoESTS, 2015). This was directly in line with achieving the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Dakar Education For All (EFA) goals (Penny, et al, 2008; Mbabazi, et, al, 2015; Syngellakis&Arudo, 2006; Jansen,2005). To date, Government continues to ensure promotion of the education aimed at improving inequalities and inefficiencies through several policy documents implemented through the Ministry of Education, Sports and Technology (MoESTS, 2015).

IV. Parliamentary instruments to ensure quality public education

Government's strategies to achieve the aims of education are contained in several policy documents including the Uganda Vision 2040, the National Development Plan 2010/11 – 2014/15, the Revised Education Sector Strategic Plan (2007 – 2015), the Education Act of 2008, the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) of 1992, and the annual Ministerial Policy Statements of the Ministry of Education and Sports. Parliament is mandated by law to pass laws for the good governance of Uganda; to provide, by giving legislative sanctions taxation and acquisition of loans, the means of carrying out the work of Government; and to scrutinize Government policy and administration among other roles (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 2016). Parliament works under the set legal framework to ensure quality public education mainly through the Education Act and other Acts like the Children's Act, University Act, Tertiary Institutions Act, BITVET Act among other relevant Acts (Ojijo, 2012). Parliament has also set up a sectoral committee on education and sports that attends to matters concerning this sector, receives and discusses petitions and presents reports before parliament as part of their mandate. Parliament also has a Parliamentary Forum on Quality Education that strives to promote the quality of education across the country. It brings together legislators who have committed themselves to ensuring the attainment of universal education. This entire legal framework is meant to address the challenges faced by the sector that hamper access, equity and efficiency as will be discussed in the section below.

V. Government Failures faced at Uganda's Primary Level Education Delivery

The Ugandan government undertook reforms to improve the provision of education at primary level and address the challenges that were hindering access, equity and efficiency. Although the access bit of these objectives has been achieved as observed from the high enrolment rates, the education sector still faces a major challenge in delivering quality education (Tumushabe&Makaaru, 2013; Zuze&Leibbrandt, 2011). Uganda continues to rank the worst in learner achievement in East Africa where on average, less than 4 in 10 children aged 10-16 years show literacy and numeracy skills at primary two level clearly revealing the decline in the quality of education (Uwezo, 2013).

In a situation where government invests its scarce resources to avert a key governance challenge and still there are indications of inefficiency (Byamugisha&Ssenabulya, 2005), it can only be explained as government failure. One fundamental reason for government failure is the character traits of the personal and bureaucratic interests of the public servants involved in the implementation of government policies and programmes. A high level of bureaucracy in most cases transfers authority from politicians, policy-makers, managers and possibly users to front-line bureaucrats (Batley &McLoughlin, 2015).Whenever the interests of the public servants or their organisations and those of the public they serve fail to meet, it creates a principal-agent problem (Stiglitz,2000). The interests of principal (the public) should be able to meet with those of the agent (s)-the public officials and organisations who implement on their behalf.

There has been a whole debate about public servants and their ability to respond to incentives and motivation. Le Grand (1997) presents an interesting model on the public service differentiation where they can either be knights- working with intrinsic motives or knaves – working extrinsic individualistic motives. While the assumption is that public servants provide and work for their clients without desire for any extra motivation or incentive, in the current quasi-market (multi-dimensional institutional framework with both free markets alongside the traditional public administration and financing), there will be those with self – interests that won't perform efficiently without any form of motivation (Smith, 2008; Le Grand 1997). Therefore, the solution would be to invest in providing incentives and motivation to the public servants such that the knavery character is enhanced and knightly character is motivated to perform better. The greatest challenge with the motivation would be to completely alter the knights into knaves which Le Grand (1997) maintains that any motivation ultimately improves efficiency.

The World Bank SABER (2012) report indicates that globally there is an increasing interest in attracting, retaining, developing, and motivating great teachers to improve student achievement. The teachers in Uganda still face high levels of demotivation from their remuneration, working conditions and performance determination (TISSA, 2013, World Bank, 2012; Uwezo, 2013; Tumushabe&Makaaru, 2013). The challenge has been, and still remains, to create affordable and

effective mechanisms to ensure that primary school teachers in Uganda are committed, motivated to provide quality teaching and learning for every student (Ward, et al,2006).

While Uganda's economic growth is steadily progressing; valued at Uganda Shillings 75.183 Trillion, approximately US Dollars 25 billion, the education sector continues to face serious financial constraints that would be helpful improving the teachers' remuneration. Although there seems to be some slight increase in the budget allocations to the sector since 2013, the difference in these allocations is still minimal to make the required changes as envisaged by the sector. In 2013/14, the budget allocated, UGX 1,477.238 Billion, 2014/15, it allocated UGX 2,300.771 Billion while, 2015/16 has allocated UGX 2,309.564 Billion while the projection for 2016/17 is estimated at UGX 2,553.923 Billion (CSBAG, 2015). These might reflect an increase in funding but don't equate to anything beyond 10% to the sectoral budget that would enable it support its human resource better. Worse still the funding architecture of the sector doesn't give more resources to the local governments that would be in position to improve the status, living conditions and remuneration of the teachers (Tumushabe and Makaaru, 2013). With these financing challenges, already, there is high likelihood that motivation levels will be so low among the teachers as they undertake their duties.

The teachers in Uganda have been bargaining for a salary increment to 100% that has quite often ended up in petitions to parliament that has taken long to bring about the desired need (Parliament, 2012). Even the negotiated 50% which was supposed to be given in 3 instalments of 15% in 2012/13, 20% 2013/14, and 15 % in 2014/15 was only provided by government after teachers undertook industrial action of sit down strikes whenever a new term was beginning. The Parliamentary Education Sectoral Committee reported that due to the poor teachers' remuneration by government, the teaching profession could only attract teachers with poor grades who only considered this as a last resort. More so, the level of absenteeism has been too high among the teachers to the extent that some teachers have confessed to either part-time in private schools or run small scale business to boost their income. Teachers like other Ugandans are faced with the day-to-day income needs (feeding the families, educating their children and alike) amidst the high inflation rates and other economic constraints.

Government attempted to solve this by encouraging teachers to form SACCOs that could help them save and borrow funds to start up initiatives to boost their incomes. The mistake that government has done was to go ahead and politicize this matter with promising a contribution to the tune of UGX 5 Billion to the SACCO. While this should have been a boost, it has only divided the teachers into who and how the fundswill be managed besides the main intention of saving wouldn't be encouraged as they now have free government funds to borrow from. The negotiating power of teachers for their salary increment has been lost in the politics of demanding for and managing the SACCO fund. Besides, the Parliamentary Education Sectoral Committee has indicated that the Teachers Union had been denied their legal right to collective bargaining over their wages as per Appendix 2 (i) of the "Public Service (Negotiating, Consultative and Dispute Settlement Machinery) act, 2008.

However, TISSA (2013) indicates that although the teachers' pay is still low, it is comparatively higher than other civil service pay at entry level i.e. 22 % higher for primary teachers (U7-upper grade) than for other civil servants (with the exception of medical and legal staff) and teachers in the private sector. The Parliamentary Education Sectoral Committee indicated that teachers demanded for an increase of basic entry salary from UGX 273,000 to at least Uganda Shillings 546,000. Even with some level of improved pay, teachers would still demand for an extra form of motivation. This means that much more needs to be done to boost teachers' motivation beyond the normal remuneration. This indicates that the education sector is still faced with the principal-agent problem that transmits into inefficiency. Therefore, there is need for undertaking a key reform in this sector to improve the quality of the standards of education as will be discussed below.

VI. Performance Pay as a Key Reform in Uganda's Primary Level of Education

Performance pay has been widely used in the private sector to improve efficiency Stiglitz (2000). While it isn't common in the public sector, a few case studies indicate that it has produced efficiency in areas where it has been applied. Burgess & Propper (2007) indicate that workers in

the public service respond to performance pay financial schemes. In his assessment on Israel schools, Lavy (2009) concluded that amidst the challenges that may arise out of using performance pay for teachers to improve student performance, it is still a viable reform to implement. Duflo et al. (2012) provides evidence that India's automated monitoring, combined with bonus payments, reduced absenteeism and improved education performance. The United States Obama administration is on record for having highly advocated for performance pay for teachers as a way of improving education sector efficiency.

A recent study indicates that poor performance rates in Uganda's education sector is partly as a result of the high rates of teacher absenteeism estimated at 27% (Chaudhury et al. 2006). In fact Tumushabe&Makaaru (2013) indicate that the education sector reform must include market based-incentives for rewarding the high performing teachers and attracting quality and talented individuals in the profession if it is to improve. The Ugandan staff performance appraisals don't impact on teachers' salaries and neither are the teachers rewarded for performing highly whether in monetary or non-monetary terms that could account for the low levels of morale among the teachers (World Bank, 2012).

Performance pay will definitely improve the productivity of workers as they are motivated to work harder and there is a high level of professional development (Lavy, 2007). Burgess &Propper (2007) state that employees will be able to direct their efforts and prioritise tasks they value highly essentially contributing to efficiency in production and a clear understanding of the priorities of those being served. More so, with performance pay, there is a possibility of attracting new entrants into the profession. This provides a "selection" effect where the poor performers will eventually weed themselves out and high performing staff is retained (Burgess &Propper, 2007). The Ugandan teaching profession is still seen as unattractive given the low pay and poor working conditions (World Bank, 2012; TISSA, 2013). Most talented candidates still shun the profession as it doesn't come with incentives and motivation.

However, performance pay comes off with its own challenges which when not well dealt with could easily hinder the expected success. As already discussed, there is a possibility of crowding out the natural intrinsic motivation of public servants to look at career development instead (Smith, 2008). Gratz (2009) disagrees with the assumption that teachers lack motivation to work sighting the fact that every teacher's desire is to see their students succeed. He indicates that most teachers just need mentoring, support, supervision, and training and other opportunities to learn and take on other responsibilities. However, this doesn't seem to answer the reason as to why there is still low morale in the profession observed from the high levels of teachers' absenteeism (Cilliers et al, 2014) alongside few talented individuals joining the profession. Therefore, the provision of performance pay is likely to solve this challenge towards improved efficiency.

Public sector organisations especially in the education sector are multifaceted with several objectives that might be hard to define. The Education White Paper, 1992 mainly aims at promoting quality education which might be hard to define (Burgess & Propper, 2007; Lavy, 2009). This could create a risk on the beneficiaries of the incentives given the lack of clarity on the achievable; something normally referred to as signal-noise ratio (Propper and Wilson, 2003). Several performance related schemes often focus on particular achievable terms like the ultimate performance/ marks of the students to provide the incentive. The challenge with this however is that the final product of a student's performance is sometimes a combination of several actors including the parents' support. Therefore, there is likelihood that teachers may earn incentives even when they haven't fully delivered the results.

In the same vein, this very challenge of performance measurement may create a "free-rider" initiative where there are team tasks (Smith, 1995). The hardworking team mates may lose morale and ultimately affecting the desired objective of efficiency. Whereas performance is easily measured at group level as compared to individual level, it might end up failing the entire system. It would be advisable for any performance pay initiative to clearly set out the requirements of individuals as per their contribution to the team and incentives given as per the contribution to the team.

Performance pay initiatives normally suffer a gaming challenge – where staff formulate various ways of gaining performance without actual performance (Rothstein, 2004; Smith, 1995). Heywood et,al (2009) indicates that there are high levels of gaming and corruption within the public sector where the staff are likely to manipulate the results. In Uganda, corruption and lack of integrity are ranked one of the greatest challenges that could easily be used in this same sector (UGMP, 2013). This will eventually demotivate those who genuinely apply themselves to the job and ruin the entire process. There is likelihood that the incentive may be modified by the employees who lower the target by lowering the baseline performance referred to as “ratchet effect” (Burgess & Ratto,2003). Such acts need to be dealt with at institutional and leadership level but most importantly applying stringent supervision measures.

Generally, performance pay improves the efficiency of public organisations by motivating the employees. Despite the fact most of the performance pay initiatives have been undertaken as case studies and not sustainably implemented, it still remains convincing that this reform improves efficiency of the sector. The challenges stated require effective monitoring and supervision. Although Tumushabe & Makaanu (2013) have indicated that reforms in the education sector require commitment by government through the Ministry of Education, Sports and Technology, there are other key institutions that should play a key role to coordinate and ensure that they are implemented. Parliament as a key institution needs to be involved in the process of regulation, budget allocation and providing oversight for effective performance pay system in the education sector. This will indeed reinvigorate the initial objectives of the Government White Paper of 1992 that stipulated improved access, equity and quality education for all Ugandans as will be discussed below.

VII. Role of Parliament in Promoting Performance Pay as a Key Reform in Uganda’s Primary Level of Education

As already discussed above, performance pay has quite a lot of benefits to the education sector as it provides motivation and promotes efficiency in the education sector. Parliament’s three main roles of enacting laws; representing citizens and providing oversight to the executive arm of government as part of promoting accountability (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2004)is very crucial in promoting good governance in any state. Therefore, parliament

should be at the forefront of ensuring that citizens are provided with the best services from the government through their work. While parliament in Uganda has been keen in calling for quality education, there still lies a gap in the follow up in responding to teachers' needs given their key role in promoting quality education. Reports from the committee of Education and Sports indicate that in the whole of 2014, the committee dealt with only one issue concerned with teachers (an investigation into the Teachers' SACCO Fund) yet a number of concerns have been raised concerning teachers' remuneration and conditions of work. And thus to begin with parliament especially the Education and Sports committee needs to show interest in matters concerned with teachers' conditions of work as part of promoting quality of public education in Uganda. In most cases, issues to do with teachers are only discussed on the parliament floor when there is an industrial action that tantamount to dealing with crisis management instead of dealing with the actual systemic issues.

By the powers derived from the Budget Act, parliament should be able change the current education financing architecture and push more expenditure to the local governments to empower them to support the teachers. Performance pay mechanism can be well managed at the local government level with all the stakeholders participating in planning the exact mode of motivating the teachers through the agreed set of indicators. Some local governments can decide to motivate all the teachers of the particular pupil who has passed well or the entire school administration or each teacher per the subject passed well depending on the agreement with the education stakeholders in the districts. Most importantly, parliament has to continue pushing for an overall increase in education sector financing in order to see to it that overall quality education is improved since pupil performance also depends on other key factors like scholastic materials, safe environment to mention but a few. The increase in budgetary allocation should be seen in percentage increase per financial year and not necessarily an addition of a few Billions that may not cause a tremendous change.

More so, the oversight powers to parliament enshrined in the constitution as per Article 79; they are required to probe the funds lost to public officials in the education sector. Tumushabe & Makaanu (2013) indicate that the quality of service delivery in education doesn't

reflect the amount of expenditure government has invested in the sector. Therefore, parliament needs to probe further to see to it that few funds released by government provide the required services and not ending in pockets of a few officials. It has been proven that curbing corruption actually contributes to efficient service delivery as the funds returned can be channelled to provide the required services. In that case, government can be able to put in place a particular fund to motivate teachers who perform well having agreed on the method and indicators for identifying such teachers. More so, the reform itself will require extra resources to implement towards its efficiency and sustainability that government has to fund.

Implementing performance pay system for teachers in Uganda would thus require amendment of the Education Act to legalise it but also provide benchmarks and indicators for the implementation. Besides, there have been various proposals on amendments required on this very Act that can incorporate an area on performance pay. The amendment should stipulate the powers given to the education ministry, local government and the schools in implementing this initiative to ensure that the discussed challenges like gaming and ratchet effect don't hinder the progress of such a useful initiative.

Generally parliament has the mandate to make laws on any matter for the peace, order, development and good governance of Uganda as per the constitutional mandate and thus should interest itself in making laws that provide for motivation of teachers as part of improving quality education in Uganda. The oversight function should be useful in ensuring that this is well implemented and benefiting those who are meant to receive the benefits while advocating for budgetary improvements to finance the reform. This will lead to improved teaching services through a highly motivated staff and attract more teachers to the profession to improve the quality of learning in public education.

VIII. Conclusion

Grout & Stevens (2003) believe that public services should be provided with an aim of being efficiently and equitably available to all citizens. Uganda's education system has moved through

different levels of reforms all aimed at providing education to all Ugandans efficiently. This provision is highly guided by the need for government to fix the challenges within the education sector especially regarding the implementers- teachers.

However, the reforms introduced by government while undertaking the intervention don't seem to have delivered quality of education as expected (Tumushabe & Makaaru, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative that an assessment of the government failures be undertaken and key reforms introduced to correct those failures. Public services can only be efficiently provided if they are equitably provided and maintain the quality standards. This specifically depends of the performance of the agents delivering that service to the public. Although public servants have been taken to be knights with intrinsic motivations, research has indicated that they still need to be motivated (Le Grand, 1997).

Parliament has a legal mandate of enacting laws; representing citizens and providing oversight to the executive arm of government as part of promoting accountability (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2004). These functions are crucial in promoting good governance and ultimately contributing to efficient service delivery. Therefore parliament should use the constitutionally mandated powers to ensure that the law is amended to suit the needs of this reform; funds are provided and the local government funding architecture is amended and also provide oversight to ensure effective implementation.

Therefore performance pay should be assessed and used as a key reform for the delivery of quality public education at primary level. This reform comes with its own challenges given the assumptions made while implementing this reform (Lavy, 2007). Despite the fact there is limited research on how performance pay can improve the public service performance, there is evidence that where it has been applied, it has gained lots of success. Uganda would indeed largely benefit from this kind of reform for its public primary level education.

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