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Principles and general objectives of education

As stated in the Government White Paper on the Education Policy Review Commission Report of 1992, the national aims of education are to:

- Promote understanding and appreciation of the value of national unity, patriotism and cultural heritage, with due consideration to internal relations and beneficial interdependence.
- Inculcate moral, ethical and spiritual values in the individual and develop self discipline, integrity, tolerance and human fellowship.
- Inculcate a sense of service, duty and leadership for participation in civic, social and national affairs through group activities in educational institutions and the community.
- Promote scientific, technical and cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to enhance individual and national development.
- 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 capacity for continued learning.
- Equip the learners with the ability to contribute to the building of an integrated, self-sustaining and independent national economy.

The document *Vision 2025* (issued in 1995) contains Uganda's long-term development objectives and has as one of its visions "an enlightened, well informed and prosperous society" with an overriding goal of "increasing people's access to information and participation in self, community and national development."

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Constitution** of 1995 guarantees the right to education. The Constitution stipulated that access to education is a right of all the citizens, the provision of which is an obligation of the State, independent of the person's age. The Constitution also provides for affirmative action for the disadvantaged, including in the field of education.

The **Local Government Act** of 1997 transferred the responsibility for primary and secondary education services to local governments.

The **Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act** of 2001 regulates the higher education sector and provides for the establishment of the National Council for Higher Education.

The **Equal Opportunities Commission Act** of 2007 gives effect to the State's constitutional mandate of eliminating discrimination and inequalities against any



individuals or group(s) of persons on the ground of sex, age, race, color, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed/religion, health status, socio-economic standing; and to take affirmative action in favor of marginalized groups.

The new **Education (pre-primary, primary and post-primary) Act** of 29 August 2008 amends, consolidates and streamlines the existing law relating to the development and regulation of education and training, repeals the former Education Act and provides for other related matters. According to the Act, the provision of education and training to the child shall be a joint responsibility of the State, the parent or guardian and other stakeholders; basic education shall be provided and enjoyed as a right by all persons; the financing of education shall be through fees, grants, donations, training levies, education tax, and any other means as deemed appropriate by Government; and religious studies shall form part of the curriculum in primary and post-primary schools. Article 13 stipulates that primary education shall be universal and compulsory for all children aged 6 years.

The **Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Act** was passed in 2008. It provides for the BTVET institutional and legal framework and defines the scope and levels of different BTVET programmes and the roles of different providers. The Act distinguishes between the functions of training provision and quality assurance, describes the criteria and access requirements for BTVET programmes and establishes institutional and management arrangements for defining qualifications (standards, testing and certification) and for providing training in formal and non-formal institutions. One key strategy is the development and implementation of the Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework (UVQF) that makes it possible to recognize prior learning, even if it was gained in non-formal training or informally.

Administration and management of the education system

The **Ministry of Education and Sports** is responsible for pre-tertiary education. The key functions of the Ministry include among others: a) develop and implement appropriate education policies, laws, regulations and strategies regarding the management and delivery of education and training, including sports services within the sector; b) plan, mobilize and ensure availability of resources to support and promote development and service delivery in the entire sector; c) ensure equitable and fair allocation, and proper utilization and accountability for all the resources within the sector; d) ensure formulation and periodic review of the education system, sector strategic plans and education and training curricula and publications; e) coordinate, monitor, evaluate and ensure implementation of all government policies and programmes relating to the education and sports sector; f) set, disseminate, monitor, periodically evaluate and ensure quality and achievement in the national education and sports standards; and g) ensure the establishment of an efficient, effective, fair and credible system of assessment and certification at all levels.

The **National Council for Higher Education**, a statutory agency established under the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001, has the responsibility of: a) regulating and guiding the establishment and management of institutions of higher learning; and b) regulating the quality of higher education, equating of higher education qualifications and to advise government on higher education issues. The



main functions of the Council are to: i) to advise the Minister of Education on higher education policy issues; ii) licence higher education institutions; iii) accredit all academic and professional programmes taught in higher education institutions; iv) set national admission standards and ensure that higher education institutions meet those standards; v) publish information on higher education; and vi) determine the equivalence of academic qualifications obtained elsewhere with those awarded by Ugandan higher education institutions for recognition in Uganda.

The **National Curriculum Development Centre**, established by Decree No. 7 of 1973, is responsible for developing relevant curricula and instructional materials for quality education that promotes national development. As provided for in the Statute, the functions of the Centre are to: a) investigate and evaluate the need for syllabus revision and curriculum reform at primary, secondary, tertiary levels of education, in pre-school and post-school education and in teacher education; b) initiate new syllabuses, revise existing ones, carry out curriculum reform, research testing and evaluation to bring up-to-date and improve syllabuses for school and college courses; c) draft teaching schemes, text books, teacher's manuals, and examination syllabuses, in cooperation with teaching institutions and examining bodies; d) design and develop teaching aids and instructional materials; e) devise, test and evaluate examination questions and methods of examining students with other appropriate teaching and examining bodies; f) organize and conduct in-service courses of instruction for the acquisition of knowledge and professional skill by persons intending or required to teach new courses developed at the centre; g) organize and conduct courses in the objectives and methods of curriculum development for persons required to participate in curriculum development work; h) collect, compile, analyze and abstract statistical information on curriculum and matters related to curriculum; i) disseminate and promote general and other better knowledge and understanding of new curricula, teaching methods and teaching aids.

The **Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB)** is a corporate body set up by the Act of Parliament No. 2 of 1983 to conduct specified examinations. The UNEB Secretariat is headed by the Executive Secretary, who is the chief executive head and the accounting officer of the Board. The mission of UNEB is to ensure continued improvement of quality, validity and reliability of assessment and evaluation of curriculum and learners' achievements. UNEB conducts the following examinations: Primary Leaving Certificate; Uganda Certificate of Education; Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education; Uganda Business Education Certificate and Diplomas (various classes); Uganda Technical Education Certificate and Diplomas (various classes). UNEB also conducted Grade III Teacher Education Examinations up to 1998.

The functions of the **Inspectorate of Education** are to: act as a setter and monitor of standards in educational institutions; ensure that education imparted in schools is relevant to the national goals of development and appropriate to the needs of Ugandan children and society as a whole; monitor the implementation of curriculum related decisions in educational institutions; identify and make known good practices and innovations and draw attention to weakness; control the quality of education and provide necessary guidance and supervision to educational institutions; advise the Ministry on matters of educational theory and practice; provide opportunities of professional development to teachers/tutors/lecturers and heads of



educational institutions through in-service training, refresher courses and publications; and conduct research and evaluation in such areas as teaching effectiveness and development of appropriate tools and supervision.

Article 46 of the Education Act 2008 stipulates that there shall be established a **Directorate responsible for standards** in all education institutions in Uganda whose function shall be to: a) set, define and review standards in educational practice and provision through planned series of inspections; b) assess the achievement of standards and to evaluate the effectiveness of education programmes of institutions and agencies throughout Uganda; c) develop systematic approaches to inspection and evaluation, and to encourage evaluation and self evaluation systems, using appropriate quality indicators, within the education service; d) provide and disseminate regular reports on the quality of education at all levels; e) develop the use of the reports as a mechanism to provide support for and the dissemination of good practice, and thus to improve the quality of practice in the education service as a whole, and in particular aspects; f) provide independent expert comment and advice on educational provision and practice at all levels of education; and g) to give advice to the Minister on such matters related to quality control in education.

The mission of the **Education Service Commission** is to provide an efficient, professional, accountable, transparent and motivated education service. The Commission derives the authority to exercise its functions from the provisions of the Constitution under Article 168, which stipulates that the Education Service Commission shall: have the power to appoint persons, to confirm such appointments, to exercise disciplinary control over those persons and to remove them from office where necessary; review the terms and conditions of the service, standing orders, training and qualifications of public officers in the education service and matters connected with their management and welfare and make recommendations on them to government.

Uganda has adopted a decentralized system of government. The decentralization policy devolved the functions of planning, budgeting and implementation to the lowest level of government, and the communities. One of the objectives of decentralization was to promote efficiency in the utilization of resources. Implementation is at two levels, e.g. the district and sub-county level. According to the Education Act 2008, **District or Municipal Councils' Standing Committees** for Education shall be responsible for the oversight role of all educational services decentralized to a district, municipal, town council, division and sub-county. Every district standing committee responsible for education shall prepare, in consultation with the **District Education Officer** and municipal, division, town and sub-county **Council Education Officer** for which it is established, an education development plan for promoting educational services for which it is responsible. There shall be constituted by the Minister or district education officer a **Board of Governors** or a **School Management Committee** for any education institution declared by the Minister or district education officer.

The lead government agency responsible for adult education is **Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development** (MGLSD). As a lead agency, MGLSD is expected to work in collaboration, and coordinate the activities of all actors in the field of adult education including line ministries, local governments, private business

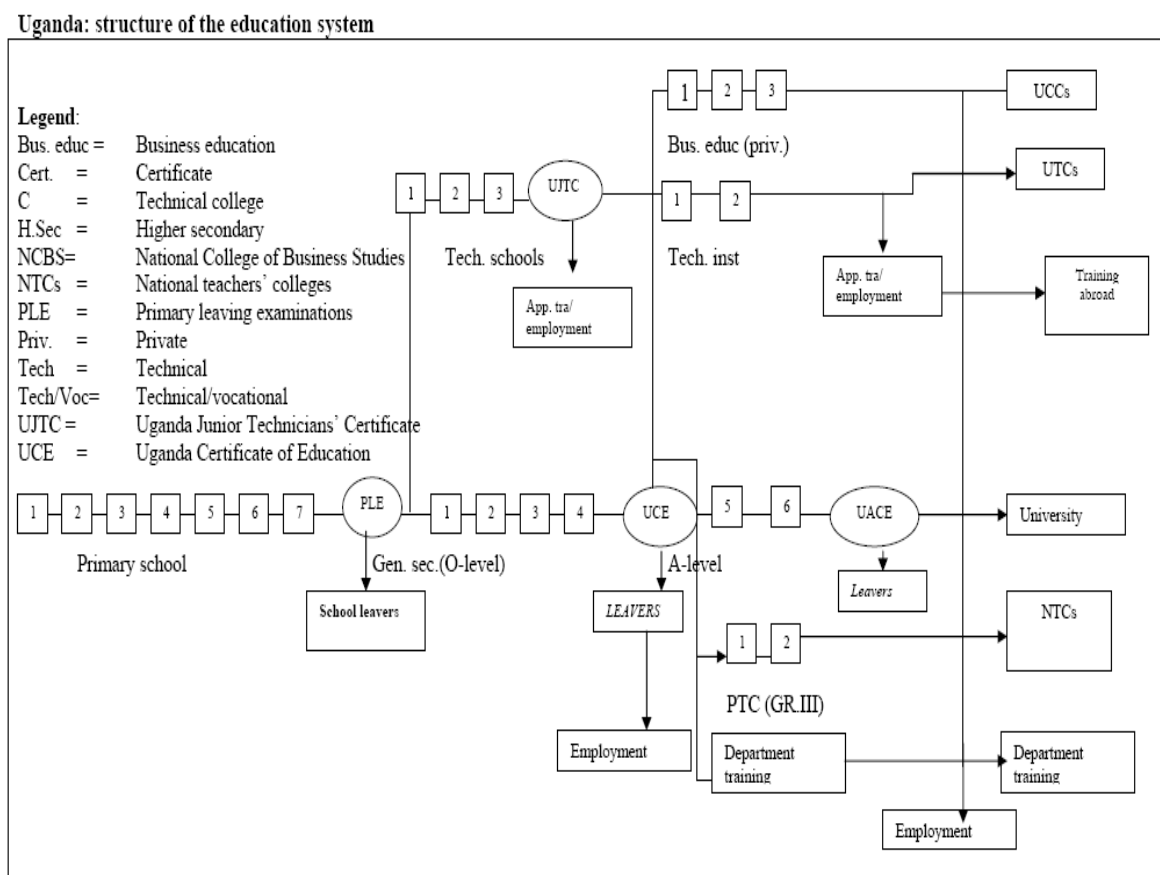


enterprises, civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners, and faith-based organizations. As the lead agency, the MGLSD is in charge of: policy guidelines and formulation; developing programmes to operationalize the policy; develop guidelines, regulations and standards for quality assurance; overall supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policy and programmes; resource mobilization and allocation; develop and operationalize the qualification and accreditation framework; and establish networking and coordination mechanisms amongst service providers and sector actors. A number of other government sectors and institutions are involved in the planning and implementation of certain aspects of adult education under their mandates. These include agencies responsible for non formal agriculture education; non formal health education (HIV and AIDS, sanitation/hygiene, etc.), civic education, and environmental education.

The **Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (OVC) Secretariat** was established in 2003 in the MGLSD to provide guide in the development and implementation of the National OVC Policy and the National Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions for OVC. It is estimated that in 2007 there were 2.3 million orphans in Uganda; one out of every four households had at least one orphan; almost one out of every two orphans was in such a condition due to AIDS; OVC were estimated to be 7.5 million, equivalent to 46% of all children in the country.

Structure and organization of the education system

Uganda: structure of the education system (1992)



Source: Ministry of Education and Sports (*White Paper on Education*, 1992.)

Pre-school education

Pre-primary education is for children aged 2/3-5 years; attendance is not compulsory. Pre-primary and nursery schools are mainly in the private sector and urban areas.

Primary education

Primary education lasts seven years and in principle it is free and compulsory for all children aged 6. According to the new curriculum (2010), primary education is divided into three phases: lower primary (grades 1-3 or P1-3), transition year (grade 4 or P4), and upper primary (grades 5-7 or P5-7). At the end of grade 7, pupils take the Primary Leaving Certificate examination. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme was introduced in 1996.

Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into two cycles: the first four-year cycle, or lower secondary education, leads to the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examination



(formerly the General Certificate of Education Ordinary level, GCE O-level); the second two-year cycle, or upper secondary education, leads to the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) examination (previously the GCE A-level). The UACE is the principal examination required for university entrance and other tertiary level education. Business, technical and vocational education and training (BTVET) is offered at community polytechnics, farm schools, technical schools and institutes, vocational training centres and technical colleges. At the lower secondary level, farm and technical schools as well as vocational training centres offer three-year programmes (four-year programmes in the case of community polytechnics) leading to the Uganda Junior Technical Certificate or Trade Test Certificate, Grade 2 – DIT-T.T.II. At the upper secondary level, technical and vocational training institutes offer two-year programmes leading to the UNEB Craft Certificate DIT-T.T.I. Primary Teachers Colleges offer two-year programmes to UCE holders leading to the award of the Grade III Teacher Certificate, which is the minimum qualification for teaching in primary schools.

Higher education

Higher education is offered at tertiary-level institutions and universities. At the post-secondary level, technical colleges, the Uganda College of Commerce and the Community Polytechnic Instructors College offer two-year programmes leading to the a diploma or a Master Craftsman Certificate DIT. National Teachers Colleges offer two-year programmes to UACE (or Grade III Teacher Certificate) holders leading to a Grade V Diploma, qualifying for teaching in primary and secondary schools as well as Primary Teachers Colleges. At the university level, short programmes leading to an ordinary or higher diploma last two years. Bachelor's degree programmes usually last between three and four years (five years in the case of medicine and dental surgery). Postgraduate programmes leading to a diploma normally last one year. Master's degree programmes take eighteen months to two years to complete; programmes leading to a doctoral degree last two to three years.

The school year for 2010 consists of 253 days (including periods devoted to tests and examinations) divided into three terms: February-April, May-August and September-December.

The educational process

Revision of the first post-independence primary school curriculum was started in 1963 and completed in 1965. Each subject was handled by a National Syllabus Panel. Each panel comprised of the subject classroom teachers, teacher educators and school inspectors. The panels were first based in the Ministry responsible for education. In 1964 the responsibility was transferred to the National Institute of Education at Makerere University.

The primary education curriculum of 1965 had two broad aims: a) to meet the needs of the school leavers in the new society; and b) to indicate to the children their place as citizens of Uganda and Africa. The 1965 curriculum was first revised in 1967, and underwent another major revision in 1989, by the National Curriculum Development Centre. The work was completed in 1990.



The 1967 primary education curriculum included the following twelve subjects: art and craft; science; English language; mother tongue; Luganda; mathematics; music; physical education; religious education; history; geography; and civics. The greatest weakness of the old primary education curriculum was its strong academic orientation.

The 1989 revision covered all subjects, but the major revisions were in science and history, geography and civics. Instead of creating another subject in an already crowded curriculum, it was decided to transfer some of the existing science topics to secondary school syllabuses and create room for the health education messages. Hence the introduction of a subject called science and health education. Components of agriculture and animal husbandry were also included. It was also felt that instead of presenting compartmentalized knowledge to a child at this level, it would be more beneficial to assist the child to gain an integrated understanding of the world and promote his/her intellectual and social development. It was with this basic aim that subjects like geography, history, civics, and environmental education were integrated into twelve topics, ranging from the family to the world, which formed a new subject called social studies, whose theme was living together. In addition, population and family life education messages were introduced in carrier subjects such as science and health education, social studies and religious education.

Each subject in the curriculum had a set of objectives. Some of the objectives concerned cognitive aspects (knowledge, comprehension and application of facts, concepts, principles). Others were concerned with developing manipulative skills, positive attitudes, behaviour and values.

The curriculum review process implied: the appointment of the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC); the production of the Government White Paper on the EPRC Report; the establishment of the Curriculum Review Task Force (CRTF); the writing of the subject syllabi by the National Curriculum Development Centre Subject Panels; and the implementation of the curriculum. The CRTF was appointed in 1992 with the following terms of reference: i) initiating and developing the strategy for implementing curriculum-related recommendations which were accepted in the Government White Paper; ii) formulating a National Curriculum that will guide syllabus development according to the national and educational aims and objectives; iii) examining ways of improving the quality of education, bearing in mind the basic needs of the learner at the appropriate level of education, the concept of an all-round education as well as vocational preparations, the need to reconcile the evaluation of students performance with the curriculum and the aim of achieving the highest quality of education for all; and iv) making recommendations to the Minister of Education and Sports including proposals for legislative changes.

The Task Force made the following recommendations: i) all primary education must be made progressively practical beginning with P1; ii) science and basic technology must be cardinal areas of study in the system of education; iii) emphasis should be put on acquisition of study and vocational skills and on development of healthy attitudes among the children rather than on factual knowledge; and iv) primary education must develop love for learning in order to lay a strong foundation for lifelong education.



On the basis of the Government White Paper and other documents, the Task Force also proposed the aims and objectives of primary education. The CRTF also identified the following eleven subjects to form the curriculum: basic primary technology (new subject to include art and craft); mathematics; language and literature (new subject), mother tongue/pre-language, English and Kiswahili (new subject); social studies; religious education; music, dance (new subject) and drama (new subject); agriculture and home economics (new subject); business and commercial education (new subject); science, health, environment (new subject) and population education; physical education; and community service scheme (new subject). The Task Force found all the subjects offered in the old curriculum relevant and essential to the needs of the primary education products. Therefore, all these subjects were retained, reorganized and expanded to include new dimensions; new subjects were identified and included.

The Educational Policy Review Commission recommended, and the Government, through its White Paper, agreed to a reform in the assessment system so that: pupils' achievements are assessed continuously throughout the primary education cycle, instead of only once at the end; the assessment should aim at improving the teaching and learning process and not only on grading pupils; and all the primary education curriculum aims and subjects must be assessed. (UNESCO, 1996).

The revised primary education curriculum was introduced into schools in two parts in 2000 and 2002. "There were similarities between the 1990 curriculum and the 2000/2002 curriculum. For example, both recommended the use of a local language as the medium of instruction in lower primary grades and both recommended that selected local languages should be taught as school subjects. However, the 1990 curriculum appears not to have had time to fully integrate the first of these recommendations, as there was no syllabus for P1 or P2 in mother tongue and thus no programme to develop local language literacy. Both curricula had ten subjects, though the subject mix is very different, and both introduced the idea of teaching agriculture (although the 1990 curriculum integrated agriculture within the science syllabus)." (Ward et al. 2006).

The primary curriculum implemented in 2000-2002 included nine subjects in P1-3 (local language, English, mathematics, science, social studies, agriculture, religious education, integrated production skills, and performing arts and physical education). It then introduces Kiswahili was introduced in P4, and local language was dropped as a subject after P6. The ten subjects were divided between two curriculum volumes and each volume was accompanied by a comprehensive teachers' guide, giving further guidance to the teachers on how to break down the topics and content of each subject. "The 2000/2002 curriculum provided clear guidelines for assessment schemes and stated that each subject has been arranged with a complete curriculum specification including attainment targets, aims and objectives and specified learning outcomes. The subjects were all presented in the same format with an introduction, followed by the units laid out in a table with the general objectives at the top, specific objectives on one side of the table and content specifications on the other. [...] The 2004 curriculum review looked at each of the aims in turn and tried to comment on the extent to which individual subjects have contributed or could contribute towards them. It concluded that the individual subject aims and syllabus development did not



consistently reflect the overall aims (for example, comparing the specific aims of agriculture or English with the general aims for education). Where the general aims were reflected in the subject aims they were not always carried through into the content and activities within the syllabus specifications. [...] In 2005 it was felt that the curriculum was introduced with inadequate planning and far too little support for teachers and schools and that this seriously undermined the effective delivery of the curriculum. Certainly there was no comprehensive curriculum implementation plan and no dedicated budget for curriculum implementation. The lack of detailed planning and the absence of a budget created a number of serious curriculum implementation problems. [...] As early as 2003 the MOES Curriculum Task Force was asked to consider a review of the 2000/2002 primary curriculum. Members of the Task Force decided to undertake field visits to familiarise themselves with the realities of curriculum implementation and to observe the delivery process in situ. The outcome of these visits and the subsequent discussions and deliberations was a decision by the Task Force in March 2003 to urgently engage appropriate assistance to review the implementation and delivery of the new curriculum.” (*Ibid.*).

The Curriculum Review team started work in December 2003 and the process was completed in early June 2004 with the submission of the final report. In April 2005 the decision was taken to proceed as fast as possible with a curriculum reform along the lines proposed by the Curriculum Review. This was confirmed by MOES and its partners and work on the reform process started in May 2005. After a pilot trial, the new thematic curriculum for P1 and P2 was implemented in 2006-2007. By 2010, materials and syllabuses have been prepared up to P5.

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is for children aged 2/3-5 years; attendance is not compulsory and services are provided on a fee-paying basis. Pre-primary and nursery schools are mainly in the private sector and urban areas.

MOES is responsible for setting up guidelines for the operation of nursery schools including registration and licensing. It is also responsible for the development, production and distribution of instructional materials, and setting guidelines for operation of the schools.

An early childhood development (ECD) policy has been prepared and disseminated in 30 out of 80 districts during 2007/08. In the same year, an ECD communication strategy was developed in order to be used as a blueprint for advocacy and mobilization. Furthermore, a training manual for community mobilization and management committees was prepared, and the ECD learning framework developed by the National Curriculum Development Centre was translated into 16 local languages. However, many nursery schools follow a different approach using methods based on the British common curriculum or East Africa Common Curriculum.

The Ministry of Education reports that the total enrolment at the pre-primary level was 43,312 children in 2007/08, for an estimated net enrolment ratio of 1% (an estimated gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 2.5% in 2007). The decrease in enrolment compared to the 2006/07 figure (52,420 children) is probably due to the fact that many nursery schools failed to return the annual statistical census forms. There is a



wide variation across the country in terms of access to pre-primary facilities. The Central region continues to be relatively served, with a total of 1,196 daycare and nursery schools, followed by the East with 495 facilities, the West with 412, the North with 283, the South-West with 283, and the North-East with only 26 facilities. (MOES, November 2008). It should be noted that the number of children aged 3-5 years was estimated at 3.5 million in 2008.

For 2008/09, according to official data there were 1,724 pre-primary schools, of which four were government-affiliated; a total of 208 schools were registered and 185 were licensed. The total enrolment was estimated at 89,296 children, including 13,048 orphans and 6,632 disabled. The GER was estimated at 5.6% and the NER at 1%. The total number of staff was 4,418, of whom 3,515 were women. A total of 2,129 caregivers had the O-level as the highest qualification. (Annual School Census 2008).

Primary education

The main objectives and aims of primary education are to:

- Enable individuals to acquire functional, permanent, and development literacy, numeracy and communication skills in English, Kiswahili and, at least, one Uganda language.
- Develop and maintain sound mental and physical health among learners.
- Instill the values of living and working cooperatively with other people and caring for others in the community.
- Develop and cherish the cultural, moral and spiritual values of life and appreciate the richness that lies in the varied and diverse cultures and values of the country.
- Promote understanding and appreciation for the protection and utilization of the natural environment, using scientific and technological knowledge and skills.
- Develop an understanding of one's rights and civic responsibilities and duties for the purpose of positive and responsible participation in civic matters.
- Develop a sense of patriotism, nationalism and national unity in diversity.
- Develop pre-requisites for continuing education.
- Acquire a variety of practical skills for enabling one to make a living in a multi skilled manner.
- Develop an appreciation for dignity of work and for making a living by one's honest effort.
- Equip the child with the knowledge, skills and values of responsible parenthood.
- Develop skills in management of time and finance and respect for private and public property.
- Develop the ability to use problem-solving approach in various life situations.
- Develop discipline and good manners. (MOES & NCDC, 2010).



The primary school curriculum is organized into three cycles, each with its own structure of knowledge, skills and learning outcomes specified in terms of the type and level of skills to be achieved. A thematic approach has been used as the organizing principle for arranging the competences and knowledge content in P1-3 (lower primary, grades 1-3). The themes have been selected as those most likely relevant to children, reflecting the everyday interests and activities as well as the national educational aims and objectives. In lower primary learning materials are to be provided in the child's own language or a language familiar to the child. The main expected learning outcomes of the lower primary cycle are that children will develop: a) basic literacy, mathematics and life skills as well as values, in a first language or a familiar language, at a level that will enable the child to mature and be prepared for further learning; b) sufficient skills in English to act as basis for developing English as the medium of instruction in the upper primary cycle; and c) an appreciation of their culture and the roles they can play in the society.

In this cycle, learning outcomes define the overall direction of the teaching and learning process. They do not contain specific learning objectives that can be assessed. However, they are achieved through competences. Competences describe the genuine abilities of the child to demonstrate that they have understood the concepts and have acquired clearly measurable skills. Competences emphasize the transfer of learning. The thematic curriculum has chosen a competence-based approach rather than an objective-based approach. In the curriculum, the idea of competence includes the idea of skill but extends it to wider levels of operations. Acquiring a competence is not only about learning a particular behaviour; it is also about understanding it.

The child is at the centre of the thematic curriculum. The themes have been selected on the basis that they are close to the child's interests and experience and reflect more closely the way in which the child views the world. The content, concepts and skills of subjects such as science and social studies have been rearranged within themes that are familiar to young children's experience. The recommended teaching methodology emphasizes the child's activities rather than the teacher's. A significant amount of class time should be taken up by activities that involve group or pair work or individual children working independently of the teacher. The thematic curriculum is flexible and not exhaustive; it requires the teacher to employ a variety of appropriate activities to enhance the children's participation in their learning. The child-centred approach is also supported by the use, in P1-3, of the child's first or familiar language as the language of instruction.

In terms of content, the new curriculum covers many of the same areas as the 1999 curriculum, but the content and the target competences are arranged around a number of different themes. By adopting a thematic approach the curriculum avoids the overlaps and repetition in content that often occurred under the subject-based curriculum. For example, in the former curriculum a topic such as 'hygiene' occurred in three different subjects, namely science, social studies and English.

A total of 12 themes have been selected, further sub-divided into 36 sub-themes. The curriculum for each year is arranged in a matrix; the themes are presented horizontally while the crucial learning areas are presented as vertical strands (mathematics competences, literacy competences, English non-medium competences,



creative performing arts, and life skills and values). The matrix shows how the competences that relate to the different learning outcomes are developed, as the child moves from one theme to another. The life skills are also presented as a vertical strand so that the teacher can relate specific life skills to each theme and sub-theme. Physical education and religious education are not included in the thematic organization; however, their scope and sequence have been organized under 12 content areas, to correspond with the teaching timetable of the 12 themes. The themes are: our school and neighbourhood; our home and community; the human body and health; food and nutrition; our environment; things we make; transport in our community; accidents and safety; peace and security; child protection; measures; recreation, festivals and holidays.

Each day may begin with 30 minutes of news and oral literature. In the news lessons children have the opportunity to bring fresh recent experiences into the classroom, share them with others, and explore connections with the themes. In the oral literature lessons children have a chance to explore their own local culture and to develop a feel for the structure and potential of their own language. Two lessons per week (in a single hour) are devoted to free activities, to be based on play although the teachers are free to structure the lessons in any appropriate way. Literacy I and Literacy II lessons should follow one another. The number of periods (of 30 minutes each) for each strand of the thematic curriculum is as follows: news, 3 periods; oral literature, 2 periods; mathematics, 5 periods; literacy I, 5 periods; literacy II, 5 periods; English, 5 periods; creative and performing arts, 3 periods for music and 2 periods for arts and crafts; physical education, 5 periods; religious education, 3 periods; and free activities, 2 periods.

The primary purpose of assessment at this stage must be diagnostic and remedial, e.g. identifying children's individual problems for help. Assessment is built into the thematic curriculum. Since the thematic curriculum is based on competences, it is essential that all competences, whether oral, written or practical are assessed. The teacher should assess the learners during the normal course of teaching, and should keep records for each child, showing the competences that the child has achieved. If a child is failing to achieve a particular competence the teacher should provide remedial work so that the child can catch up.

Grade 4 (P4) is conceived as a transition year in which children will change from a theme-based to a subject-based curriculum, and gradually from their local language to English as a medium of instruction. The emphasis will be on rearranging content, concepts and skills rather than introducing new content or concepts. Children and teachers will start the year using the local language and there will be a steady increase in the use of English. By the end of P4 the local language will be used only for explaining the most difficult concepts. Written materials, including textbooks, will be in simple English and all assessment will be in English. The aims at P4 level will be for the children to achieve: a) English skills, both oral and written, to a level in which learning can take place in English across all subjects; b) a transfer of all competences acquired in the first or familiar language into English; c) building on the content, knowledge and competences already acquired through the theme-based curriculum, but now transferred to a subject-based framework; and d) applying the developed skills and the ability to think creatively in English using knowledge and concepts already acquired in P1-3.



Finally, in the P5-7 cycle (similar to the previous curriculum) the concepts, knowledge and skills are arranged in subjects. Subject syllabuses will align with and lay a good foundation for secondary school subject syllabuses. The aims of this cycle will remain the same as those already expressed in the former curriculum for upper primary, e.g. preparing the learner for secondary education, the world of work, scientific and technical application of knowledge and life skills. (MOES & NCDC, 2007).

The proposed weekly period allocation per subject is presented in the table below:

Uganda. Primary education (transition year and upper primary): proposed weekly period allocation per subject

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	P4	P5	P6	P7
English	7	7	7	7
Social studies	5	5	5	5
Religious education	3	3	3	3
Mathematics	7	7	7	7
Integrated science (with agriculture)	7	7	7	7
Local language	3	3	3	3
Creative arts and physical education	7	6	6	6
Library	1	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	40	40	40	40

Source: Ministry of Education and Sports; National Curriculum Development Centre. *Integrated science syllabus. Primary four*. Kampala, 2010. Each teaching period lasts 30 minutes. Religious education is either Christian or Islamic religious education.

In 2009, a total of 488,745 candidates sat the Primary Leaving Certificate examination which includes four subjects: English, mathematics, social studies and basic science. The average pass rate was 85.6%. Basic science was performed best (88.2% pass rate), followed by mathematics, social studies and English.

The Ministry of Education reports that the total enrolment at the primary level stood at 7,537,971 pupils in 2007/08, for an estimated gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 113.1% and a net enrolment ratio of 93.3%. The total number of primary schools was 15,181, of which 11,654 were government-aided schools. The transition rate to the first year of secondary education (e.g. Form 1 or S1) was 68.6%, and the overall P7 completion rate was 47%. The percentage of qualified primary school teachers in primary schools was 88.9%. (MOES, November 2008).

For 2008/09, according to official data there were 15,962 primary schools, of which 11,787 were government-affiliated schools. A total of 12,080 schools were registered and 577 were licensed. The total enrolment was 7,963,979 pupils, including 1,360,952 orphans and 183,537 disabled children (mainly hearing and visually impaired). The GER was estimated at 115.7% and the NER at 95%. The total number



of repeaters was 872,261 (of whom 234,902 in P1). The pupils-teacher ratio was estimated at 50:1. The total teaching force was 159,516 teachers, of whom 65,531 were women. Most of the teachers (e.g. 103,519 teachers) were Grade III teachers (Annual School Census 2008).

Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into two cycles: the first four-year cycle, or lower secondary education, leads to the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examination (formerly the General Certificate of Education Ordinary level, GCE O-level); the second two-year cycle, or upper secondary education, leads to the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) examination (previously the GCE A-level). The UACE is the principal examination required for university entrance and other tertiary level education.

Secondary education aims at linking the learner with what has been provided at the primary level, while preparing him/her for further education. Through the various subjects, education at this level aims at among others: a) instilling and promoting national unity; b) imparting and promoting ethical spiritual values; c) instilling positive attitudes towards productive work; and d) developing basic scientific, technological and commercial skills.

In 2007/08 the process for the review of the secondary education curriculum was started. O-level teaching syllabuses for 18 subjects were developed, including components of business and technical education.

Currently, the secondary education curriculum includes the following subjects: English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history. For the value and skills-based subjects (which include: literature in English, religious education, music, art, agriculture, technical drawing, woodwork, metalwork, business education, home economics, clothing and textiles, food and nutrition) schools are given the opportunity to identify subjects that they can handle. Schools are required to offer a maximum of 14 (seven compulsory and seven electives) subjects. Students offer a minimum of eight (seven compulsory and one elective) and a maximum of 10 subjects (seven compulsory and three electives at S3 and S4). English, mathematics and science (physics, chemistry and biology) constitute the compulsory subjects. Single session schools are required to deliver the fourteen-subject curriculum within the framework of a weekly lesson timetable including 48 periods, each of 40 minutes.

The implementation of the Universal Secondary Education policy started in 2006/07. For 2007/08, the USE programme covered two years (e.g. Forms 1 and 2, or S1 and S2) in 1,235 participating secondary schools (of which 804 were government-aided and 431 private schools). Under the programme, the government pays capitation grants to meet tuition fees for all eligible students enrolled in beneficiary schools.

As mentioned, business, technical and vocational education and training (BTVET) is offered at community polytechnics, farm schools, technical schools and institutes, vocational training centres and technical colleges. At the lower secondary level, farm and technical schools as well as vocational training centres offer three-year programmes (four-year programmes in the case of community polytechnics) leading



to the Uganda Junior Technical Certificate or Trade Test Certificate, Grade 2 – DIT-T.T.II. At the upper secondary level, technical and vocational training institutes offer two-year programmes leading to the UNEB Craft Certificate DIT-T.T.I. In 2007/08, most of the BTVET institutions (81%) were privately-owned; the total number of public BTVET institutions was 131. In the same year, the total enrolment in BTVET was estimated at 29,441 students, of whom 23,102 were boys.

In 2009, a total of 212,497 candidates sat the UCE examination. Performance has improved in history, geography, physics, chemistry and biology, although the science subjects have continued to record very high failure rates, with over 50% of the candidates unable to pass at the minimum grade 8. Mathematics performance improved at the Distinction level, but declined at the credit and pass levels. English language, Christian religious education and agriculture recorded a decline in performance. In the same year, a total of 96,655 candidates sat the UACE examination, with 98.6% of candidates qualifying for the award of UACE. Significant improvement at A-E principal level passes has been recorded in geography, mathematics, physics and chemistry although the percentages of candidates failing to obtain pass are still quite high. It can also be observed that most UACE candidates offer arts subjects. Entries for the science subjects have remained low, at less than 20% of total candidature. Entries for chemistry have even declined.

The Ministry of Education reports that the total enrolment at the secondary level was 954,328 students in 2007/08, of whom 437,074 were girls. The student-teacher ratio was 19:1. The number of secondary schools was 2,644, mainly concentrated in the Central region (733 schools). The net enrolment ratio was estimated at 21.3%. The completion rate for Form 4 (or S4) was 35%. (MOES, November 2008).

For 2008/09, according to official data there were 2,908 secondary schools, of which 914 were government-affiliated schools. A total of 1,472 schools were registered and 243 were licensed. The total enrolment was 1,088,744 students (of whom 499,386 were girls), including 251,363 orphans and 11,145 disabled students (mainly physically and visually impaired). The GER was estimated at 27.6% and the NER at 23.5%. The total number of repeaters was 25,982 (mainly concentrated in S1-4). The students-teacher ratio was estimated at 19:1. The total teaching force was 57,158 teachers, of whom 14,209 were women. In terms of qualifications, 11,397 teachers had an O-level plus a certificate/diploma, 11,397 had an A-level, 14,332 an A-level plus a certificate/diploma, and 11,781 had a first graduate degree. (Annual School Census 2008).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Uganda did not participate in the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) I project, but in 1998 MOES decided to participate in the SACMEQ II project, which focused on the assessment of learning achievement in reading and mathematics of grade 6 (P6) pupils.

The overall national mean score for reading was 482.4, which was below the SACMEQ mean of 500. For mathematics, the mean score was 506.3 which was slightly higher than the SACMEQ average of 500. There were some variations in



mean scores amongst regions. In reading, pupils in Eastern Region had the highest mean score (492.3) and Western Region had the lowest (457.3). For mathematics, Central Region had the highest mean score (526.6) and Western Region had the lowest (465.4). On average, girls' performance in reading was better than that of boys. The average performance for girls was 485.9 yet that for boys was 479.6. The difference was, however, not statistically significant. In mathematics, the pattern in performance was reversed, with boys marginally outperforming girls. Once again, the difference was not statistically significant.

Pupils from the upper socio-economic status subgroup performed better in the reading tests with an average score of 520.1 than those in the lower socio-economic group whose score was 467.0. In addition, the results also show that the best performing schools were those in the urban locations possibly because there were more facilities and access to other services that enhanced their learning opportunities. In mathematics, pupils from the higher socio-economic group scored higher than those from the lower socio-economic group, and the pupils from urban areas similarly scored higher than those from rural areas.

Nation-wide only 35.4% of the pupils were able to reach minimum level of mastery in reading and 10% percent were able to reach desirable level of mastery in reading. Large variations were found among regions in terms of the percentage of pupils that had reached the minimum level of reading literacy. Eastern region recorded the highest percentage (42.1%) and the Western region had the lowest (24.9%). At the national level 89.5% of the teachers reached the minimum level of mastery in reading literacy and 80.2% reached the desirable level. However, this means that 10% did not reach the minimum level and 20% did not reach the desirable level. (SACMEQ, 2005).

In the framework of the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) programme, for 2007/08 the Ministry of Education reports that the proportion of pupils rated proficient in literacy was 47.2% in P3 and 49.6% in P6; concerning numeracy, the proportion of pupils rated proficient was 44.8% in P3 and 41.4% in P6. (MOES, November 2008). According to the preliminary results of the 2008 National Standardized Test for S2 (Form 2) students, 81.9% of students reached minimum competency levels in English, 69.4% in mathematics, and 36.7% in biology.

Teaching staff

Primary school teachers are trained in Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTC) and secondary school teachers in National Teachers' Colleges (NTC) and universities under the Teachers Development Management System that has been operational since mid-1990s.

The minimum entry requirement for PTCs is O-level with pass in six subjects including mathematics, English and at least two sciences. A-level is considered an additional qualification. The pre-service programme consists of two years of training (four years in the case of in-service teachers willing to upgrade their qualifications, taking place in Coordinating Centres affiliated with PTCs) in content and pedagogy, with three school practice periods of eight weeks each. The curriculum includes



professional studies, mathematics, language, science, social studies and cultural studies. It is prepared by by Kyambogo University (established following the merger of the Institute of Teacher Education, Uganda Polytechnic, and the Uganda National Institute for Special Education), which has the mandate for primary teacher education. If they are successful in the final examination students are awarded the Grade III Teacher Certificate, the basic requirement for teaching in primary schools.

Teachers' shortage has led to prioritizing the implementation of the policy of 100% government sponsorship of students joining PTCs and 80% sponsorship for those joining NTCs. In addition, students enrolled in all 46 government-aided PTCs are being trained on competencies required to deliver the P1-3 thematic curriculum. Furthermore, the Scheme of Service targeted at all serving staff has been introduced as a framework for career progression and development. Plans are underway to develop an new secondary teacher training curriculum that is focused on improvement of instructional skills for teachers in an inclusive education system. (Republic of Uganda, April 2010).

NTCs offer two-year programmes to UACE/A-level (or Grade III Teacher Certificate) holders leading to a Grade V Diploma, qualifying for teaching in secondary schools (but also primary schools) as well as in PTCs.

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Uganda National Examinations Board: <http://www.uneb.ac.ug/> [In English. Last checked: September 2010.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>