



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

**UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)**

**Changing pedagogy: A comparative analysis of reform efforts in Uganda and Turkey**

Koşar Altınyelken, H.

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Koşar Altınyelken, H. (2010). *Changing pedagogy: A comparative analysis of reform efforts in Uganda and Turkey*.

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

*UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<http://dare.uva.nl>)*

Download date: 30 Oct 2020

## **CHAPTER: 2**

---

### **National context**

Uganda is a landlocked country in the eastern part of Sub-Saharan Africa with a total area of 241,039 square kilometres (about the size of the United Kingdom), neighbouring Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya. The country has a population of nearly 30.6 million (2007 figures) (UNDP, 2009), characterised by huge ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. At independence in 1962, there were 15 major ethnic groups, speaking an estimated 63 languages or dialects, of which Luganda, spoken in the Buganda region encompassing the capital Kampala, is the most widely spoken. However, since independence, the official language as well as the dominant language of instruction is English due to the colonial links with Britain. There are four main tribal groupings: Bantu, Nilotic, Nilo-Hamites and those of Sudanic origin. The majority of Ugandans adhere to Christianity, as 41.9 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and 42 percent is Protestant. Additionally, 12 percent of Ugandans are Muslims, and the rest adhere to indigenous religions. Ethnicity continues to dominate group formation; however, other divisions, religious and economic, cut across these ethnic divisions. Uganda is divided into four statistical zones (Northern, Eastern, Central and Western) and into 80 administrative districts.

#### **1. Political history**

The early inhabitants of Uganda included Bantu-speaking people who came to the region from present Congo around 500 BC. From the north-east, the Hima (present-day Ankore), and from the north, the Luo, moved into the region. These groups have often joined and mixed together. At the same time, they fought against each other for resources. Through these interactions, the early tribal groupings were formed. Later on, these groupings were translated into kingdoms and societies that were led by chiefs and clan leaders. The societies had no central authority and the land was held communally under clan leadership. These groups included, among others, the Lango, Acholi, Karimojong, Iteso, Lugbara and Kakwa in the North and Eastern regions. Battles between them took place on a regular basis. In contrast, the present Buganda, Bunyoro, Ankole and Toro were structured as kingdoms and organised on hierarchical lines. They all had a central authority under a king

who had control over populations through clan leaders and chiefs. Occasionally, these kingdoms also fought for superiority and access to land (Nganda, 1996).

The first Europeans came to Uganda in the 1860s. Muteesa the First, who was the king of Buganda at that time, accepted help from the British, to protect and reinforce his position against other foreigners. In the following period, British traders and missionaries came to the Kingdom of Buganda and their influence increased when the British East African Company was given responsibility by the British to administer the area. In 1890, Germany, which was the colonial power in what is now Tanzania, and Britain, drew the boundaries between their East African colonies. From 1900 till its independence, Uganda remained a British Protectorate (Leggett, 2001; Nganda, 1996). In 1962, Uganda achieved its independence from British colonial rule. Its formation as a state, however, was not the result of a gradual national integration process. On the contrary, Uganda's existence and its borders were determined by intense rivalry and competition among imperial powers aiming to control the headwaters of the Nile (Leggett, 2001).

During the decades following independence, Uganda has remained a deeply troubled and divided country in which cultural, political and economic divisions from the pre-colonial and colonial past were exacerbated (Bwengye, 1985; Boas, 2000; Klugman et al. 1999). The colonial boundaries created by Britain to delimit Uganda brought together a wide range of ethnic groups who had inhabited the region for at least 2000 years and had different political systems, languages and cultures. These differences prevented the new establishment from having a working political community after independence.

Moreover, the legacy of the British divide-and-rule policy had some devastating consequences. The British managed to maintain order between the country's numerous ethnic groups by sub-dividing Ugandan society along ethnic lines. They categorised and stereotyped ethnic groups based on their perceived abilities and capabilities. For instance, it was believed that people from the north were more suited to the police force and the army, while those from the south, especially Buganda, were more capable of pursuing jobs that require academic competence (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). As a result, members of Alcholi and Lango from the north dominated the military, while southern groups were active in business. Consequently, some parts of the country, primarily Buganda, came to acquire more privileges compared to other groups. These privileges included improved opportunities to receive formal education and influential positions in society. As Baganda chiefs

administered various regions on behalf of the British, their cultural influence also expanded. These divisions, in turn, contributed to an escalation of tensions and grievances between various ethnic groups (Boas, 2004; Deininger, 2003).

Following independence, the country endured numerous coups and military dictatorships. The authoritarian regime of Idi Amin (1971-79) was responsible for the deaths of some 300,000 opponents, and guerrilla war and human rights abuses under Milton Obote (1980-85) claimed at least another 100,000 lives. During this period, Uganda became notorious for tyranny, oppression, corruption, tribalism, human rights abuses and civil war. It was widely perceived as the basket case of the continent (Leggett, 2001). The political turmoil of those decades resulted in decreases in GDP, decline in agricultural and industrial output, a deterioration in export performance, high rates of inflation, widespread poverty and poor health and educational services (SACMEQ, 2005). During this period, the structural inequalities within the country were also further compounded.

In 1986, the army of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power. Under the leadership of Museveni a new government was formed. Whilst the victory of the NRM failed to end Uganda's national divisions and violent conflicts (Boas, 2004) it did bring some stability to the country. The new government's ambitious economic recovery programme succeeded in high growth rates and some reduction in poverty levels. The country's economic performance in the 1990s became a success story and Uganda was praised by the West as a model for sub-Saharan Africa (OECD, 2008). Nevertheless, violent conflict continued, particularly in the northern part between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government. In fact, the conflict in northern Uganda became a profoundly violent war in which civilians, particularly women and children, were the main victims. An estimated 2 million people were internally displaced, and each week more than 1,000 died, primarily from malaria and HIV/AIDS, in the area (Sullivan-Owomoyela, 2006). A Comprehensive Peace Plan was discussed for two years with LRA. However, in 2008 the war broke out again when the armies of Uganda, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) attacked the rebels in the DRC's Garamba National Park. Joseph Kony, the LRA leader, refused to sign the Comprehensive Peace Plan, insisting that his indictment by the International Criminal Court should first be dropped (OECD, 2009).

Since 1986, president Museveni has governed Uganda under a 'movement system', which is a de facto single party without any opposition. Museveni envisioned a political system without political parties, and

legitimatised this choice by his concerns for sectarianism and ethnic conflict. Accordingly, all Ugandans were supposed to be represented by the National Resistance Movement and elections were to be held on the basis of individual merit. The Ugandan experience with ‘no party’ or ‘movement’ democracy came under criticism from both domestic actors and international donors as it was increasingly seen as a hegemonic party system in disguise (Bogaards, 2010). Indeed, many critics described Uganda’s political system as a quasi-authoritarian regime (Tangri & Mwenda, 2010).

Consequently, a referendum in 2005 led to the adoption of a multi-party system and opened the upcoming elections to other political parties. Several amendments were made to the Constitution and other Acts of Parliament, enhancing the election prospects of Museveni and his political party. One of the most important amendments was abolishment of the constitutional limit on the President’s tenure of office to two terms. The Presidential and Parliamentary elections held in February 2006 were the first multi-party elections in Uganda in the last 25 years. Incumbent President Museveni was re-elected with 59 percent of the vote (OECD, 2009). Soon after coming to power in 1986, Museveni had attributed the ‘problem’ of Africa in general and Uganda in particular to political leaders ‘who want to overstay in power’. However, he continues to see himself as indispensable to the stability and prosperity of Uganda, and seems to be determined to contest the Presidential elections in 2011 and run for a sixth term (Tangri & Mwenda, 2010).

## **2. Economic and demographic background**

After 1986, the NRM initiated a national reconstruction process including large-scale reforms in major areas of social and economic policy. The donors have also been highly involved in this process. The reform efforts generally displayed a commitment to democratisation and economic reconstruction, and were characterised by liberalisation, privatisation, deregulation, decentralisation of governance, and the consolidation of private property rights (Brett, 1995). These measures aimed at enabling the private sector to become the major engine of growth. In the 1990s, Uganda experienced significant economic growth and substantial increases in national revenue. The country is regarded by some as one of the most successful economies in Africa, and its strong economic performance was attributed to prudent macroeconomic management and bold structural reforms (OECD, 2006). It is also important to highlight that the role of donors in the recovery and growth

process has been critical, as economic reforms were supported by large inflows of foreign aid, making Uganda a strongly aid-dependent country (Wiegratz, 2006). In 2007, ODA net total (all donors) amounted to USD 1.7 billion (African Economic Outlook, 2010), accounting around 30 percent of Uganda's annual budgetary resources (Reuters, 2010).

Economic growth has largely been fuelled by expansion in agriculture, construction and the communications sectors, and averaged 7 percent for much of the 1990s (Ward et al., 2006). Despite the slowdown in the beginning of 2000s, the country recorded high growth rates in recent years, well above sub-Saharan African average. The real GDP growth was 8.1 percent in 2007. Growth was driven by the service sector (led by financials services, transportation and communications), which accounted for half of GDP. Agriculture and fishing accounted for 22 percent of GDP in 2007. Coffee, cotton and cut flowers are important cash crops. The industrial sector (manufacturing, construction and mining) accounts for 23 percent of GDP and is estimated to grow further. The discovery of commercially viable oil deposits in the western part of the country has raised hopes that Uganda will soon become a net oil exporter (African Economic Outlook, 2010).

Despite high growth rates recorded in the past two decades, Uganda remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with a GDP of USD 16.6 billion and a per capita GDP of USD 521 (2008 figures) (African Economic Outlook, 2010). The country is classified as a lower income country by the World Bank (World Bank, 2009), and listed under the 'medium human development' countries by UNDP (ranking as the 157<sup>th</sup> out of 182 countries in the world) (UNDP, 2009). Although poverty has fallen, it still remains high. According to Uganda National Household Surveys, the poverty levels have fallen in the past two decades. The 1992/93 survey estimated that 56.4 percent of Ugandans were poor. The 2002/03 survey reported the share of poor people as 38.8 percent and the latest 2005/06 survey recorded further decline to 31.1 percent. The final survey indicated substantial urban/rural and regional differences in poverty levels: 94.1 percent of poor people were living in rural areas and half of the poor were from the northern region, and 24 percent from the east (UBOS, 2006).

According to international benchmarks, the rate of population with an income below USD 1.25 a day was 57.4 percent in 2002, and 51.5 percent in 2005. In addition, the rate of population below with an income USD 2 a day was 79.8 percent in 2002 and 75.6 percent in 2005 (World Bank, 2010). There are significant regional differences in Uganda, as the Northern region has the highest poverty rate (60.7 percent), highest annual average population

growth (4.2 percent), highest fertility levels (an average of 7.9 children per woman) and highest proportion of people living in a hut (68 percent) according to 2005/06 figures. The second most disadvantaged region is the eastern region, followed by the western region. The central region, on the other hand, scores much higher on several social and economic indicators (UBOS, 2006).

Recent statistics point to low life expectancy at around 52 years. The population growth is 3.3 percent, which is one of the highest in the world. Over 87 percent of the population lives in villages and small trading centres. In fact, there is only one significant city in the country, the capital Kampala in the south (UNDP, 2009).

### **3. Education system**

#### *3.1. Historical overview*

During the colonial period, educational development in Uganda was highly dependent on the initiatives of Christian missionaries. Educational opportunities were available only to small elite (e.g. children of the aristocracy, clergy and tribal chiefs) and the masses remained largely illiterate. After independence, the Castle Commission (1963) recommended expansion of post-primary education, improvement of educational opportunities for girls, provision of adult education, increased parental contribution to education and a strong emphasis on education quality. The government took measures to realise the Commission's recommendations, making massive capital investments into secondary education and constructing schools throughout the country. These policies also reflected the prevailing strategies of international aid agencies at the time on high-level manpower development (Tumushabe, 1999). The Castle Commission report guided education policies until the 1992 Government White Paper.

In the post-independence period of 1960s, the education system of Uganda was considered as one of the best in East and Central Africa. However, the enduring conflicts from the second half of the 1960s to the mid-1980s had a devastating impact on all aspects of Uganda's social, economic and political life, including its education system. Prior to mid-1980s, budgetary allocations to the education sector had dropped to less than 1 percent of GDP, only 50 percent of the children could go to school, and over 90 percent of educational costs were paid directly by parents. Furthermore, in the majority of the schools, infrastructure had been either destroyed or

damaged severely; textbooks, teacher manuals and other supplementary materials were in short supply; and teachers were underpaid, under-trained or untrained and consequently highly demoralised. Additionally, educational planning and management systems could not function effectively, rendering curricula and related assessment systems obsolete (Eilor, 2005; MOES, 2001). In addition to political instability and violent conflicts, heavy debt burden, declining commodity prices, and rising orphanhood associated with war and AIDS have also disabled the education system's ability to provide good quality education to the growing number of Ugandan children (Tumushabe, 1999).

After NRM came to power, the new government appointed the Education Policy Review Commission. The Commission published its report in 1989 and recommended the universalisation of primary education by the year 2000. A second committee, which was appointed in the early 1990s, published a Government White Paper in 1992 entitled *Education for National Integration and Development*, and set out a major education reform programme to be realised in the next 25-year period. The White Paper also emphasized providing education opportunities for all Ugandan children by a slightly later date of 2003 (Ward et al., 2006). This was motivated by the Commission's conviction that participation in primary education is a prerequisite for achieving national unity and accelerating economic growth in Uganda (Higgins & Rwanyange, 2005).

Nevertheless, the government was slow to implement these recommendations and to commit adequate resources to the education sector. Stasavage (2005) argues that education was not high on the reconstruction agenda in the post-1986 period, and that even a decade later President Museveni was reluctant to commit to a primary education strategy that would require significant increase of public expenditures. Instead, he continued to favour prioritising road building and defence expenditure. Nonetheless, the return to multi-candidate political competition in 1996 helped lead Museveni to promise abolishment of primary school fees. In response to public enthusiasm for the issue, the emphasis on Universal Primary Education (UPE) became more and more pronounced during the course of 1996 campaign. Democratic party politics was also critical to the successful implementation of UPE: in the post-election period, it was soon understood that education would be one of the main areas by which government's performance would be evaluated by the public. Therefore, unlike some other governments who came to power with similar promises in African countries, Museveni steadily increased public expenditures on education (Stasavage, 2004).



In the early 1990s, reconstruction of education was initiated with a series of reforms under the umbrella of the Primary Education and Teacher Development Project funded by the World Bank and USAID. The reforms were designed to increase enrolment rates, reform teacher training, improve supply of textbooks and instructional materials, and revise the primary school curriculum. Furthermore, the UPE, which was launched in 1997, aimed at reducing the high cost of primary education and making primary schooling compulsory and tuition-free. The policy also sought to increase budgetary allocations to primary level; indeed more than half of the total education expenditure was directed at primary sector in the following years (Tumushabe, 1999). The UPE has resulted in dramatic increase in primary school enrolment rates, as primary enrolment grew from 3.1 million in 1996 to 7.4 million in 2008 (UBOS, 2009). There were also significant improvements in the provision of infrastructure (e.g. classrooms and teacher houses) and the recruitment and deployment of teachers. Several donors in Uganda have also supported universal primary education as an objective and at various platforms, they have tried to persuade the Ugandan government to devote more resources to primary education. From the perspective of donors, in addition to being a basic human right, provision of primary education is an effective means of poverty eradication and economic growth. Donor support has played a critical role in implementation of UPE and other educational reforms since external agencies have covered more than 50 percent of the education sector budget in grants, loans and technical assistance (DGIS, 2003).

Furthermore, in 2006, the Ugandan government announced the free Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme, and became the first sub-Saharan African country to adopt such a policy. The programme was motivated by increasing demand for secondary education, employers' need for more highly educated workforce, and Museveni's aim to draw more votes by the promise of free secondary education. The policy was adopted with little attention to system capacity, organisational planning for implementation stage, financial resources or for anticipating consequences of rapid expansion of secondary schooling. As Chapman et al. (2010, p. 81) suggests, 'USE is best understood as a symbolic and political decision of Government'. Therefore, its implementation was plagued with various challenges (see Clegg et al. 2008 for an in-depth analysis of implementation challenges).

The White Paper continues to guide the current educational policies in Uganda. Furthermore, the country is committed to achieve the EFA goals and the MDGs. Education is considered an important sector in national

development; it has been identified as a key component of human capital quality and an essential ingredient for sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. The education sector was also linked directly to a multi-sectoral Poverty Eradication and Action Plan, and the role of education in strengthening civil institutions, building a democratic society, empowering women and protecting the environment has been underscored (MFPED, 2004).

Educational goals and objectives are laid down in strategic plans by the Ministry. The Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) was developed for the period of 1998-2003 and prioritised improving access to primary education through UPE programme. Since this objective was largely realised by 2004, the new plan – the Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2004-2015 – set out new priorities, including raising the quality and relevance of education and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the education sector. The government focuses on improving the capacity and the quality at primary level and reducing inequalities in access to primary schooling. The government is also taking action to increase educational opportunities at secondary levels, which has been primarily financed by parents (Winkler, 2007). Higher education, on the other hand, is increasingly liberalised and privatised (Syngellakis & Arudo, 2006).

### *3.2. Structure of the education system*

Uganda's education system includes education and training at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Pre-primary education is not part of the formal education system, but provided by private individuals and NGOs. It is mainly concentrated in urban areas. Primary education comprises seven years and the official age range is 6 to 12 years. Secondary schooling involves two levels: ordinary secondary (four years) and advanced secondary (additional two years). The official school age range is 13 to 18 years old. Pupils who complete ordinary secondary education are awarded with the Ugandan Certificate of Education or 'O' level, and those who successfully complete advanced secondary are awarded with the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education or 'A' level (Ward et al., 2006). Tertiary education involves universities, colleges of commerce, technical colleges, as well as teachers' colleges. The A-level secondary school certificate is required as a basic entry to universities and colleges of commerce. In addition to the formal system, there is a non-formal education system which aims to serve the educational

needs of disadvantaged children and young people (see Hoppers 2008 for an overview of non-formal education in Uganda).

Transitions between different levels of education are governed by a national examination system. At the end of their primary schooling, pupils take a national examination, the Primary School Leaving Examination, at grade seven. Likewise, at the end of lower and upper secondary schooling, students sit in for centrally administrated exams. At each transition stage, high numbers of students are forced to leave the education system because of the lack of capacity at post-primary levels (Syngellakis & Arudo, 2006). The national examinations are designed and conducted by the Ugandan National Examinations Board (UNEB). Curriculum development at all levels of education other than tertiary is the responsibility of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) which was established in 1974. Since the 1990s, planning and administration of education has been gradually decentralised to the districts. Districts are required to manage the delivery of primary and secondary education in collaboration with schools and communities. The role of the central authorities has mainly become policymaking, investment management and quality assurance. At the district level, education is supervised, planned and overseen by the District Education Officers. The Government provides for the inspection and supervision of all educational institutions (Tumushabe, 1999).

### *3.3. Patterns of participation*

According to most recent statistics provided by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, there were around 7.5 million Ugandan children enrolled at primary schools in 2007. The net enrolment ratio was 95 percent, and gender parity index was 1.03 in the same year. The number of out of school children was reported as 341,000, of which 36 percent were girls. Repetition rate for all grades for the year 2005 was 13.1 percent (UNESCO, 2010). Completion rates have been considered unsatisfactory as more than half of the pupils do not finalise their primary education (MOES, 2008). For instance, only 685,000 children were enrolled at grade five in 2006 out of 1.8 million children who were registered at grade one in 2000 (UBOS, 2009). In 2008, a new law was passed to make attendance compulsory. Parents can face up to seven years in prison if their children are not in primary school. The pupil-teacher ratio at primary level has improved slightly since 2000, from 59.4 to 57 in 2008. Class sizes remain large at 72 (OECD, 2009). There were 131,000 teachers working in the education sector in Uganda in 2008 (UBOS, 2009).

At secondary level, around one million students were enrolled in 2008, which corresponds to a 23.5 percent net enrolment ratio. Participation levels at tertiary level are much lower as there were only 155,000 students attending tertiary education institutions in 2007 (MOES, 2008).

It is also important to highlight the significant differences in educational attainment across the country (see Higgins, 2009; Tumushabe, 1999). According to the findings of 2005/06 Uganda national household survey, 20 percent of the population aged 15 years and above had never had any formal education, 43 percent had had some primary education, but had not completed primary seven. The proportion of people without any formal education was higher in the rural areas (23 percent) than in urban areas (9 percent), and the proportion of females who had never had formal education was higher (28 percent) than that of males (11 percent) (UBOS, 2006). Gender disparities in education are mostly caused by high dropout rates of girls in upper primary school, characterised by low retention, repetition, dropout and non-completion. Therefore, while overall enrolment figures for girls are comparable to boys at lower grades, from grade four onwards there is widening of the gender gap (MOES, 2005). This is caused by a mix of complex factors, including poverty, domestic work, differential parental attitudes towards girls' education, early marriage and gender-based violence at school (see Tumushabe, 1999 for a detailed discussion of these issues).

#### *3.4. Major issues at primary level*

The Ugandan primary education system suffers from some system-wide problems. According to a study aimed at analysing the efficiency of the Ugandan public education system, the main issues at primary level included the leakage of financial resources between the central government and the school; high teacher and head teacher absenteeism; and poor teacher deployment (Winkler, 2007). Six percent of total budgeted recurrent primary education expenditures is estimated to be leaked through ghost teachers, misuse of UPE grants by district governments and questionable expenditures of the Ministry. Teacher absenteeism is high in Uganda, estimated around 27 percent, a rate which is much higher than other developing countries. Moreover, across districts, teachers are not deployed to the regions where they are most needed. Also, although early grades have a larger class size and later grades a much smaller one, the number of teachers allocated to early grades is fewer. In addition, the lack of an effective inspection system at the district level contributes to lack of accountability by districts and schools to

parents, the public and the Ministry, and contributes to low levels of educational quality (Winkler, 2007). In relation to teacher deployment, the inadequacy of teacher training is also frequently highlighted as an important issue. All teacher education programmes were reviewed in 2006 and their improvement was underscored as critical to enhancing education quality (O'Sullivan, 2010).

Although enrolment rates have increased sustainably after the introduction of the UPE programme, and Uganda is projected to achieve UPE and Millennium Development Goal 2, there are serious concerns about high dropout, absenteeism and repetition rates. Besides, the learning achievements of those who stay in school are distressingly low. For instance, in 2008, the percentage of children who achieved expected competencies in literacy was 47 at primary three and 51 at primary six. For numeracy, the achievement levels were lower: 46 percent at primary three and 44 percent at primary six (MOES, 2008). Although these levels are considered low, they nevertheless indicate some improvement in recent years. Indeed, the periodic studies conducted by UNEB have shown much lower achievement levels in the past years (UNEB, 2005; 2003).

Ownership in education policymaking is another concern. While external donors tend to believe that education policies have been driven largely by the Ugandans themselves, this perception is not fully shared by their Ugandan partners (DGIS, 2003; Higgins & Rwanyange, 2005). High dependence on donor aid, which accounts for more than 50 percent of the Ministry budget, makes it very likely that the Ugandans conform to donor priorities and refrain from policies that would alienate the donor community in Kampala. For instance, between 1998 and 2002, external assistance funded between 54 percent and 61 percent of the recurrent costs of primary education (DGIS, 2003). The urgency of improving the efficiency and quality of primary schooling as well as the announcement of universal secondary education have intensified the Ministry's need for financial resources. However, there is fierce donor criticism directed at mounting corruption and government's reluctance to combat it. Some donors are already considering a range of actions, such as withholding disbursement, reductions in aid or reprogramming aid away from direct budget support. Cutbacks in aid would likely endanger the government's key public investments in the education sector (Reuters, 2010).

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

This chapter attempted to describe the broader contextual background in order to portray under which circumstances the curriculum for primary schools was revised in Uganda. It also helps to better comprehend the contextual factors that are likely to influence the implementation of the new curriculum. As the chapter highlights, Uganda is characterised by a young population, huge regional income inequalities, high levels of poverty and (inter-ethnic) tension, resource scarcity, and overdependence on donor support. The country takes great pride in its UPE programme as it resulted in dramatic increases in access to primary education. Indeed, Uganda came very close to achieving universal enrolment and gender parity. Many referred to Uganda as a success story and an exceptional case on a continent which has some of the lowest enrolment rates and largest gender disparities in the world. However, although UPE increased access to education, it has paradoxically compromised access to knowledge because of declining education quality. In an attempt to reverse such negative trends and improve children's access to good quality learning processes, the Ministry introduced a new curriculum in 2006, called the Thematic Curriculum. The next two chapters will trace the curriculum review process and critically examine the implementation of the Thematic Curriculum and the new pedagogical approach from the perspectives of teachers.