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**Low Completion Rates in Universal Primary Education in Uganda and Malawi –
Issues and Factors that are Impacting Educational Attainment**

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Abstract

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Universal Primary Education policies have been implemented in many countries as a response to the focus of universal primary education in agendas of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. These policies often entail removal of fees so that education can become accessible for everyone. However, despite these policies being implemented to create an enabling environment for educational attainment, many children do not complete primary education. This thesis will investigate what factors might influence completion rates of universal primary education in Malawi and Uganda, and these factors will be identified to consequently be analysed. This will be done in reference to a theory of institutional monocropping in which it is said that institutional blueprints are being implemented into countries without taking the context into consideration.

Keywords: Universal Primary Education, Uganda, Malawi, low completion rates

Abbreviations

EFA	Education for All
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPE	Universal Primary Education

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1. Introduction

The following chapter will introduce the area of research and the purpose of the thesis, along with identifying the research question that is going to be answered in this paper. In addition, a definition of the concept of universal primary education along with a definition of contextual factors will be provided, with a disposition of the thesis ending the chapter.

1.1 Introduction to area of research

Universal primary education as a part of the development agenda has been prevalent to various degrees since the 1960s, when the outcomes generated from participating in education first was given notice (Moyi 2010:236). According to Kadzamira and Rose (2003) many international organisations, along with national governments, have prescribed education as a tool for development and believe that educational attainment can play a role in poverty reduction, as it is seen to enhance productivity on both agricultural and economic levels (Kadzamira and Rose 2003: 502). There are many factors that tend to influence and shape an education system, among them are the roles of bi- and multilateral organisations, but also political and economic trends, the mass-media and lastly are the conferences that have a focus on agenda setting. An example of such a conference was the Jomtien Conference on Education for All (EFA), which has had a major impact on the way in which education has been ascribed as a development tool (Nieuwenhuis 1997:130-133). At the Jomtien Conference on Education for All, consensus was made on increasing the efforts to achieve universal primary education by the end of the Millennium. When that did not occur, achieving universal primary education became one of the targets in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Johnston 2011:97). The Millennium Development Goals were set to be reached by 2015. Both EFA targets and the MDGs have commitment to universal primary education as part of their agendas and the design of the targets and goals were done in order to increase the access to basic schooling. By setting a time limit it was assumed that this process would go faster (Lewin 2009:154-157).

Lewin (2011) sees that the setting and implementation of international targets, such as the EFA and MDGs, are not taking the national political and social contexts into consideration and do not take into account that the various countries might have different points of departure and different capacity to achieve the targets. Each country have different progression rates when it comes to

achieving the targets and setting a time limit on achievement are impacting many countries in their strive to achieve the targets. Although the Millennium Development Goals have been accepted by many developing countries it has not been obligatory for the countries to do so or to implement policies in order to achieve them. Nevertheless, after the Jomtien Conference on Education for All, the policy field of education became more homogenised as the targets became a part of the development discourse and national plans (Lewin 2011:3). Nieuwenhuis (1997) argues that the design and implementation of education policies are influenced by the context in which it is to be implemented in, in particular to the political and economic climate in the country, given that these issues can facilitate or hinder the extent of implementation (Nieuwenhuis 1997:130-133).

There are several challenges that developing countries are facing in connection to policy implementation and design. These range from unclear understanding of the education sector and its structure, vague objectives, or not enough analysis of the possible financial and social consequences that an implementation of a policy might bring with it (Jallade et al. 2001:13-14). In addition, many developing countries are faced with limited funds to allocate to education priorities and therefore find it easier to implement policies that are similar to those that have been implemented elsewhere (Baker and Wiseman 2005: 6). As such, with a situation where the capability of a country to develop their education sector on their own accord is faced with numerous challenges, it is not surprising that international agendas are becoming prevalent in national contexts (Jallade et al. 2001:2-4, 9).

Implementing policies in relation to the goal of universal primary education has become a way to further development towards reaching the targets of EFA and MDGs for many governments (Sasaoka & Nishimura 2010:80). The policies that have been implemented in relation to the goal of Universal Primary Education tend to entail removing school fees for primary education in order to make it attainable for everyone, no matter of socio-economic background, thus trying to reach everyone that was previously excluded due to financial reasons when fees were in place (Nishimura et al. 2008:161, Pius Nudzor 2012:348; Johnston 2011:101). As mentioned, many countries implemented Universal Primary Education policies as a response to the EFA goals, and these policies tend to look similar no matter in what country they are

implemented, in that they are often of an economic nature, with the fees on primary education being removed for public education (Grogan 2008:236).

Moyi (2010) argues that although there has been an increased focus on providing education so that everyone can attain it, there are still many people in developing countries that are not enrolled in school or that have not finished their education (Moyi 2010:236). Chimombo (2005a) continued on the same track as he noted in his research that although progression has been made in increasing the enrolment rates of children in developing countries in to education, it was noted that a large amount of children do not attend school, nor complete it, both in terms of dropping out and of not having the adequate numeric and literate skills once they have finished (Chimombo 2005a:129).

1.2 Aim of thesis and research question

Uganda and Malawi are two countries that both implemented Universal Primary Education policies, and did so in the 1990s, Malawi in 1994 (Oketch & Inoue, 2008:42) and Uganda in 1997 (Ssewalmala et al. 2011:472). UNDP (2007) noted that although the number of enrolments increased significantly in Uganda after the UPE implementation in 1997 the rate of completion did not match the enrolment figures. Between the years of 2004 to 2006, the completion rates decreased from 60 per cent to 40 per cent of those who had enrolled in school (UNDP 2007: 20). When the Ugandan government implemented UPE policies they did so for all grades of primary education at the same time, which thus consequently led to a massive increase of enrolment of children into primary education. The same happened to other countries that implemented similar policies (Grogan 2008:183-184). In Malawi, Kadzamira and Rose (2003) noted in their research that enrolment rates in primary education was lower the higher up in the grades a student advanced, which consequently means that the completion rates did not match enrolment rates (Kadzamira & Rose 2003:305). Statistics obtained from UNESCO (2013) regarding enrolment and completion in Uganda and Malawi respectively, showed that completion rates of primary education are still not matching the enrolment levels. In 2011 Uganda had a net enrolment of 94 per cent, but statistics showed that only 55 per cent of those enrolled finished primary education (UNESCO 2013, Uganda). Malawi on the other hand, had in 2011 a net enrolment of 77 per cent and with 71 per cent of those enrolled completing primary education (UNESCO 2013, Malawi).

Although Uganda has achieved high enrolment rates, the country is still struggling with keeping children in school and keeping them from dropping out (Riddell 2003:13).

These statistics then show that Uganda has a higher rate of children enrolled than who complete primary education and the same go for Malawi. So although UPE policies have been ascribed to increase enrolment rates for both Malawi and Uganda in their attempt to achieve universal primary education, a problem is that children do not complete their education. This notion is supported by Lewin (2007) who argues that while enrolment figures have increased, these figures do not reveal how many children are enrolled but do not attend. As such, these children are on paper receiving education although they might not be present in practice. In addition, the enrolment numbers often entail students that have repeated grades or are older than what is ascribed for a certain grade (Lewin 2007:579). As there is a discrepancy between the enrolment rates and completion rates this thesis will try to examine what factors might be present which can influence why children enrol in education but do not complete it. It will do so by trying to answer the following question:

What contextual factors may underlie the low completion rates of Universal Primary Education in the countries of Malawi and Uganda?

The purpose of this study is to present an overview on what issues might attributed to why some countries in Africa are struggling with keeping children in school, with reference to Uganda and Malawi. This will be done in light of the theory of institutional monocropping.

1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 Definition of Universal Primary Education

The definition of Universal Primary Education will be referring to that of the Millennium Declaration (United Nations, 2000) which states that: '[...] children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling, and that boys and girls will have equal access to all levels of education' (United Nations, 2000:5). In other words, universal primary education means that everyone should have the right to basic education, on a primary level.

1.3.2 Definition of Contextual Factors

The research question sets out to find an explanation to what contextual factors might influence the completion rates of Universal Primary Education in the two countries Uganda and Malawi. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009), the word *context* is defined as the following: '[t]he situation, events or information that are related to something and that help you understand it' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2009:364). Furthermore, contextual are defined as '[r]elating to a particular context' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2009:365). As such, a context can thus be ascribed with many connotations and therefore it is necessary to make clear what contextual factors actually will be referring to in this paper. In this case, contextual means the settings and structures that exist in the two countries, for example, traditional gender roles, predominately agricultural societies and the relevance of educational attainment for the labour market. Therefore, the contextual factors in this thesis are referring to the aspects which might enforce or influence the reasons behind why children might not complete their education.

1.4 Disposition

The thesis starts with an introduction to the area that has been researched, which also contains the aim of the thesis and the research question. The second chapter discusses the methods that have been used in order to collect data and through what channels this has been done. The third chapter entails the theoretical framework, and the fourth chapter will provide a background in order to get a better understanding of the topics at hand. Second to last comes the analysis, which will investigate what factors might explain the low completion rates in Uganda and Malawi. The thesis will end with a conclusion that will try to summarise the main points and arguments of the paper.

2. Methods

This chapter will present the method that has been utilised when conducting research for this paper, as well as identify from where this data has been collected. Furthermore, limitations to this study will be discussed.

2.1 Method

This thesis will be done through a narrative literature review in order to, as Bryman (2012) notes: '[a]rrive at an overview of a field of study through a reasonable comprehensive assessment and critical reading of the literature' (Bryman 2012:102). In other words, by using literature review as a method this thesis will seek to explore why completion rates of primary education in Africa tend to be low, with Malawi and Uganda as references. According to Bryman (2012), a narrative review does not have strict criteria in which material to include or exclude, thus giving them a wide scope, in that the purpose is not to come up with something new, but instead to gather an understanding of the topic at hand (Bryman 2012:110). Furthermore, a multiple-case study will be undertaken, in order to see if the factors that are influencing completion rates in the two countries are similar to one another. The reason for choosing Malawi and Uganda for the study was because they were the two first countries to implement similar UPE policies in relation to the targets and goals of the EFA and MDGs. Malawi was one of the first countries to implement policies in relation to Universal Primary Education, with the introduction of Free Primary Education policies in 1994 (Oketch & Inoue, 2008:42), whereas in the case of Uganda UPE policies were implemented in 1997 (Nishimura et al. 2008: 162, Ssewamala et al. 2011:472).

2.2 Data

The thesis will be based on secondary data collected from various reports, academic journals and books that cover the issues of Universal Primary Education in Africa, particularly in reference to Uganda and Malawi. The search for data has been conducted with the use of keywords that are related to not only UPE, but also informal and formal institutions in Africa and policy implementation. Some of the keywords that have been used are universal primary education, livelihoods, education in Uganda, education in Malawi.

2.3 Boundaries/Limitations

When using secondary data it is important to keep in mind the authenticity, representativeness and credibility of the sources, according to Bryman (2012). Bryman (2012) notes that the author of whom the secondary data belongs to might have a bias to what is considered as important to highlight and to be aware that a bias might exist is important when using secondary data. As

such, it is important to examine the data in relation to other documents in order to gain a more comprehensive view of an issue. Furthermore, when collecting secondary data it may be impossible to cover everything that has been written or said on the topic, thus making one's own research subjective in what is chosen as relevant for one's own research (Bryman 2012: 544, 551). There are many issues that are pertained to the notion of Universal Primary Education and this paper has therefore focused on certain aspects of it, primarily completion rates and issues connected to that problem, when doing the research. Furthermore, as the study is focused on two cases with similar contexts it may be hard to generalise the findings to other contexts.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Institutional monocropping

This thesis will build upon Evans (2004) theory of institutional monocropping, supported by Hydén's (2006) and Kelsall's (2008) notions of formal and informal structures. The theory of institutional monocropping that Evans (2004) developed rests on the notion of externally created standardised institutional models being implemented in developing countries, without taking the national settings and context into consideration. A model that has been proven to work in one setting is assumed to work in other ones as well, even if the factors that generated success in one country might not exist in another. What Evans thus argues with the theory of institutional monocropping is that these homogeneous institutional models do not take the diverse contexts in which they are implemented in, into account. Furthermore, Evans argues that with institutional monocropping these models are often implemented to organizational structures with formal rules, which are assumed to be adhered to. However, it is argued that in many developing countries the functioning of these institutional designs are influenced by informal structures as well, and this factor must be taken into account if institutional monocropping is going to work (Evans 2004:30-34).

Hydén (2006) argues that with an international presence in national politics, there has been a significant pressure for African countries to strive for aims that are seen as necessary for governance from a Western point of view. However, the way in which to achieve this have often been through a blueprint, or institutional monocropping, which consequently means that there is

a standard that in theory should apply to all countries, something that Hydén argues, the same as Evans, are not taking into account the social and political climate in many African countries (Hydén 2006:10). Bratton (2007) argues that in many countries formal and informal structures often play a significant role in at the political realm. It is argued that in developed countries there is a high reliance on formal structures, whereas the situation looks slightly different in many developing countries as the role of informal structures can be seen to have more significance when it comes to certain aspects (Bratton 2007:96-98).

Continuing along the same line as Evans (2004), Kelsall (2008) argues that the forms of institutions that are being implemented from outside of Africa do not match the local context and therefore creates an environment which facilitates opportunistic behaviour, and thus have an impact on the way the state is perceived by the public. As such, an explanation for the lack of progress within development areas in African countries might then be ascribed the fact that the institutions do not match the environment in which they are implemented in. In addition, it is argued that people are most reliant on support and provision from the extended family, and it is within these relations where people are acting on political and moral grounds. These relations are treated with value and people are careful of disrupting them (Kelsall 2008: 237-238).

4. Background

The following chapter will provide an insight into some social and political notions that are prevalent to various extent across Africa, and also provide a background on universal primary education in order to provide a base on which the analysis will be built on.

4.1 Informal and Formal Structures

The role of informal and formal structures was mentioned briefly in the chapter on theoretical framework and although the extent to which these are significant differs across nations, it is important to mention them in order to gain an understanding of the analysis that will follow in the subsequent chapter. It should be kept in that the situations and scenarios that are going to be discussed in this chapter are prevalent to various extents in the different countries in Africa.

Hydén (2006) noted that in some countries the state is seen as stronger than in others and at the

same time the informal structures have more significance in some countries than others (Hydén 2006:69). As such, the topics that will be brought up in the following chapter might be more widespread in some countries in Africa than in others.

According to Kelsall (2008) politics in many countries in Africa today are based on notions of society and power that are remains from that of pre-colonial eras, in that these notions are viewed in the light of family and informal relations, and that these relations have significant influence on politics. In relation, it was also argued that the extended family can play a substantial role in the political sphere. It was noted that beyond the extended family reliance were put on clans and ethnic groups, whereas the state was emphasized last. In relation to this, it was noted that public services were often secured through informal structures, which goes against the structure of the formal structures from which these services are supposed to be provided (Kelsall 2008:233-234,646). Hydén (2006) argues that a reason for the informal relations prevalence over formal relations might be ascribed to the fact that the informal ones are in a sense more concrete and direct than formal ones, which tend to be seen as more abstract. In addition, in some African states, the divide between public and private is not as clear-cut as in other parts of the world, and as such, the public interests might be meddled by private ones. Furthermore, state and society are often seen to be intertwined, which impacts the power that the state has as it is influenced by pressures from the society. In such a situation it is argued that the formal structures do not constitute the power that they have been seen to hold outside of Africa. The informal structures are thus seen as the premier choice for support which in turn have impact on formal structures at the national scale, in that efforts from formal institutions are often being overridden by the power of the informal structures (Hydén 2006: 65-265).

According to Hydén (2006), the family and the relations associated with it are examples of informal structures. In many African countries it is not uncommon that the family tends to be extensive and range beyond just the immediate family. The informal structures provide another form of security for people in that they present a sense of familiarity and safety, and these factors are seen to become increasingly relied upon when people are facing risk or uncertainty. In situations of uncertainty it becomes easier and feels safer for people to rely on the informal, familiar types of relations than that of the state - a relation that it is argued has previously been

uncertain itself. Informal relations, such as kinship and extended family, have for a long time acted as a system of social security, when no such other system has been in place. These informal relations rest upon the notion of reciprocity and that those individuals entailed in such relation shares that same assumption. In addition, it was noted that relations such as kinship have impact on social and economic activities, as neither the market nor the state have that influence (Hydén 2006:80-88, 114, 164-165, 172, 226).

4.2 Universal Primary Education

The notion of education as a tool for development is, according to Semali (2007) based on other countries positive experiences with education, where educational attainment is believed to enhance productivity and make people participate more in society. As such, it is assumed that those same outcomes will be generated elsewhere too (Semali 2007:416). However, Kadzamira and Rose (2003) note that although investments in education are seen to have positive outcomes once it has been attained, there are factors that can constrain people from enrolling in the first place or for continuing on with their education. Education is seen as a long-term investment, but does not have direct benefits in the short-term which then indicates that people are forced to make sacrifices that might put strain on them in the short-run but hopefully lead to progress once education has been completed. For example, education might not be the first priority when a family is struggling to have enough food to eat (Kadzamira & Rose 2001: 5, 11). Furthermore, Nuwagaba (2012) argues that there are several connotations that are ascribed to the attainment of education, mainly that it is a tool for individual progress in that it generates more opportunities than without it, and that once education has been attained it will generate both personal development and development for the community (Nuwagaba 2012:93).

When it comes to many developing countries, their ability to carry out changes in the society is often restricted due to many factors such as weak institutions, with limited and wrongly allocated resources. Furthermore, their initiatives might be hampered by international agencies of which the priorities differ from that of the government (Grindle 2004:536). Although Grindle (2004) are referring to governance priorities, the notes she makes can be seen to have value when referring to other topics as well. She notes that when it comes to priorities, donors often emphasise the importance of rightful use of resources, the poor accentuates access to the

services, whereas the politicians consider the consequences that an implementation of the priorities might have on their political support. This then creates an adversity on which one should be prioritised, and which of them should be given most significance (Grindle 2004: 538). Chimombo (2005a) argued in his research that it can be difficult to reach everyone even when policies pertained to a particular purpose has been implemented. As such, there are groups that are at a disadvantage when it comes to educational attainment and completion. Reasons for the disadvantage are often ascribed to financial factors but there are also other factors that bring about the disadvantaged position of certain groups, in that some educational policies are fixed in the political, social and economic relations of the society (Chimombo 2005a: 133).

Universal Primary Education policy implementation entailed removal of school fees, which then led to increased enrolment in many countries. However, this increase had unforeseen consequences that affected the quality of education in almost every country. As the removal of fees opened access to primary education for those that had previously not been able to attend, students that started attending school under the new UPE policy tended to be much older at the time of entry than the ascribed starting age. In addition, with a large amount of new students, the size of classes also increased (Grogan 2008:208).

Keeping the theory of an institutional monocropping being implemented in different settings in mind, in this case UPE policies being implemented in Uganda and Malawi, the next section will try to uncover factors that might explain why both countries are experiencing low completion rates. This is to see if those factors are related to the complications that Evans (2004) rose about institutional monocropping.

5. Analysis

This part of the thesis will investigate what factors influence completion of education in Uganda and Malawi and try to gain an understanding why the completion rates are low in both countries.

5.1 Universal Primary Education in Uganda

As in many other developing countries, Universal Primary Education was put in place in Uganda in order to increase the access to primary education. This was done through the government taking over the responsibility to cover cost such as entry fees and school administrative costs. Initially it was meant to cover four children in each family that was of appropriate age to go to school, but was changed in 2002 to cover every child that was of school-going age (UNDP 2007:19). Prior to the implementation in 1997, funding to public education was limited and the costs that were present were funded by private sources, such as families, leaving the government to fund the remaining part. After 1997, there was a shift and the government took over the role of providing for public education whereas the role for families were to provide the costs for meals, uniforms, classrooms and material. The fees for school were thus removed, but other costs remained in place for the families to provide for (Nishimura et al. 2008: 162). Other fees that might be associated with schooling, such as textbooks, clothes and transport to and from school are still to be provided by the family of the student (Grogan 2008:186).

McGee (2000) argues that the focus on universal primary education and formal education is disregarding the fact that there are other forms of education that are also taking place. Informal education, along with vocational training is other aspects that are prevalent in the Ugandan society. The informal sector in Uganda is large, which then puts a question towards if formal education has any outcomes that are relevant for participation in informal activities along with its impact on livelihoods in rural areas (McGee 2000:101). There are various forms of primary schooling and the types differ across Uganda. Grogan (2008) found in her research that 82% of children that have partaken in primary schooling have been attending schools that are provided by the government, and thus falls under the UPE policy of free education. After that, the other forms are private non-religious schooling, which stands at around 10%, and religious private schooling, which 3, 8 % of the children attended. Furthermore, it was noted that non-religious schooling was most prevalent in urban areas, whereas in the rural areas government provided primary education had the highest prevalence. As such, it was implied that the UPE policy would have more effect in rural areas than urban ones (Grogan 2008: 191).

Although there has been a significant increase of enrolment rates it was also noted that Uganda has had problems with children finishing their primary education. In addition, there is also an uncertainty on the number of children that are not partaking in education at all (Ekaju 2007:40). Uganda has been marked by conflict in the rural Northern, North-east and West areas of the country. As such, the unstable climate in which education has been offered has had an impact on the overall quality in those areas. There is a shortage of teachers in those areas, whereas areas that have accommodated the people that have been replaced by the conflicts have problems with facilitating these newcomers with education. In the northern areas of Uganda, educational services are highly dependent on efforts from external agencies, such as UNICEF and NGOs (UNDP 2007: 20). In addition, some teachers are not adequately educated, or even educated to teach at all. Furthermore, the reasons for high drop-out rates are ascribed to limited economic resources, restricted health, along with significant distances to school (UNDP 2007: 20).

The education system in Uganda consists of primary school, which entails seven years, with a starting age of six. In addition, secondary school is made up of six years and then three to five years of tertiary or university studies. Primary education is free and also compulsory, whereas education past primary school is optional (Kakuru 2003:1).

5.1.1 Household Structures and Financial Costs in Uganda

Allison (1983) noted in her research that the extended family plays a significant social and economic role in many developing countries. As such, the consequences that education of a child in the household will have on the household activities will determine whether or not a child will be sent to school. The outcomes from a child's educational attainment in the long-run are often put in relation to other opportunities and their possibility for benefits for the household in the short- and long-run. In other words, the loss of a productive member of the household will be put in relation to what might be gained by attaining an education (Allison 1983:265). McGee (2000) notes the same thing when it comes to the case of Uganda, in that even though enrolment has been made easier with the removal of fees the decision of when, or if, children enrol, along with the decision of continuation of school lies within the household of the child. This is due to the fact that it is in the household where the outcomes and consequences of education are felt (McGee 2000:102).

Nishimura et al. (2008) acknowledges that the poor are a marginalized group and many educational efforts have been made in order to reach them. However, in order to attain an education a lot of both economic and personal investments are required and many poor people lack the resources for such investments. Therefore, although fees have been removed as part of UPE policies, the other costs can be a barrier for poor in obtaining an education. As such, economic aspects still have a large impact on the attainment of education in the case of Uganda (Nishimura et al. 2008: 163, 169). Chimombo (2005a) argues that indirect and direct costs of schooling thus have an impact on educational attainment for children of a household. The indirect costs are particular relevant to rural households, as it is in these regions where children often take part in activities to support household resources instead of going to school. Where education is desired, but not compulsory, there is not much the state can do to influence the households to send their children to school. Furthermore, the socio-economic level of the household from which a child comes also impacts the level of schooling that is being attained or if they are taking part in education at all. Those that are poor are less likely to participate in education than those that are better off, as the indirect costs that are associated with educational attainment can be too much for a poor family to facilitate (Chimombo 2005a: 131-132).

5.1.2 Harassment, Labour Structures and Unequal Gender Relations in Uganda

As already mentioned, the enrolment rates increased significantly in Uganda after the implementation of UPE policies, which generated access for poor and rural children who had previously been excluded from participating in schooling (Kakuru 2008: 40). In her study on gender in relation to primary education, Kakuru (2008) found in the areas of Uganda which were subjugated to research, that although the number of girls enrolled in education increased, inequalities between boys and girls were unaffected. The reason for this was ascribed to household structures and livelihoods of the families, in that there was a high emphasis on labour, both for economic purposes and within the households. In these situations girls were prescribed as having to carry the majority of the burden which then impacted their school attendance and participation. It was noted that this was particularly prevalent for public schools rather than private schools, as many of the children in the public schools came from backgrounds where the livelihoods consisted of farming which entailed little economic returns. This was put in contrast

to the private schools where the students mostly came from a background where the parents earned an income through economic work (Kakuru 2008:40-42). Furthermore, gender relations also become apparent in schools when girls are participating in class. In his research, Chimombo (2005a) argued that the expectations on girls were lower than they were for boys. In addition, the distance to school also plays a factor for girls educational attainment as the longer distance a girl has to school, the less likely she is to attend it (Chimombo 2005a:133-135).

5.2 Universal Primary Education in Malawi

Malawi introduced Universal Primary Education policies in 1994 and did after that experience a significant increase in enrolment rates. Several studies, such as Moyi (2012), Kadzamira and Rose (2001), Chisamya et al. (2012) and Kadzamira and Rose (2003), noted the increase in enrolment rates, but also noted other problems that was related to the implementation of Universal Primary Education policies (Kadzamira & Rose 2001: 5,8, 15-16, 19; Chisamya et al. 2012: 745; Kadzamira & Rose 2003:504, Moyi 2010: 238). Kadzamira and Rose (2001) and Chisamya et al. (2012) both questioned whether the quality of education declined as a result of the upsurge of students that enrolled in education. This due to the fact that it was seen that insufficient resources were being allocated to education, there were teacher shortages in combination with large size classes and the curricula was not adapted to the circumstances in which they were taught (Kadzamira & Rose 2001: 5, 19, Chisamya et al. 2012: 745).

Kadzamira and Rose (2003) ascribed the significant increase in enrolment rates to children above the given starting age re-entering education again after school fees were eliminated (Kadzamira 2003:505). In addition, Moyi (2010) found in his research that the age of when a child starts school has a relation to completion rates. He noted that there is a higher likelihood for a child that enters school later than the ascribed age to not finish school. The same situation applied if a child is not in the grade corresponding to the age of the student. Furthermore, the reasons that influence why children start school at a later age are the same as why they do not complete their education. These vary from the responsibilities in the households, financial constraints, quality of school, their nutrition levels, along with long distances to school (Moyi 2010: 237). Furthermore, although the enrolment levels have risen as has the completion rate, the completion levels do not match the number of enrolment as many students are quitting school before they have learned to

completely read and write. Thus there is a problem of retaining people in school, due to factors such as poverty or that children are needed to work in the household (Kadzamira & Rose 2001: 8, 15-16).

Malawi has for a long time been dependent on external investments into their education sector, which gives international organisations a leeway to exert their influence in the policy-making process (Kadzamira & Rose 2003:504). This is due to the education sector not being able to provide the needed efforts for development and therefore donors are able to step in. The insufficient efforts can be narrowed down to capability shortages due to either unqualified or new staff which consequently can lead to situations where policies are adopted where the implications have not been properly considered. In addition to this, it is uncommon in Malawi that stakeholders are approached and take part in formulating education policies, which then leads to policies in many cases being drawn up by others, such as donors (Kadzamira & Rose 2001: 9-10).

The current education system in Malawi is made out of eight years in primary school, following of four years in secondary school and lastly four years of university, and the appropriate age to start primary school is ascribed to the age of six (Moyi 2010:237).

5.2.1 Household Structures and Financial Costs in Malawi

The level of economic resources are a factor that comes to play in determining if child takes part in schooling, as financial costs associated with schooling, such as covering costs for textbooks are impacting the participation of children, particularly girls, in school (Kadzamira & Rose 2003:304). Furthermore, Moyi (2010) noted that the financial aspects of schooling influence whether or not a child attains education, in that the level of household resources determines if a child can be sent to school. If there are high indirect costs of schooling, it is more likely that a child will not attend or continue school. In addition, the indirect cost are not just directly related with school, but also entail costs for households as they might lose a productive member that could have contributed to labour within the family unit, but instead is going to school (Moyi 2010: 237). This situation is particularly relevant to Malawi, as it was noted that children might

be needed to help out in the household rather than attaining an education (Kadzamira & Rose 2003:508).

5.2.2 Harassment, Labour Structures and Unequal Gender Relations in Malawi

Malawi is experiencing the problem of getting girls to partake in education at the same rate as boys. According to Chisamya et al. (2012) the difference of girls' and boys' educational attainment can be ascribed to the perceptions that are held on women and the expected role they have in society. Although there is now a more equal level of both boys and girls on educational enrolment, gender relations seem to have stayed stagnant (Chisamya et al. 2012:746-748). An exacerbating factor to this can be that of the perception held by parents and teachers on girls versus boys when it comes to learning and what may be gained from it (Kadzamira & Rose 2001: 21, Chisamya et al. 2012: 747). In addition, when it comes to the gender structures in Malawi, Bisika et al. (2009) noted that violence and harassment against women are other factors that are influencing girls' educational attainment. The same study noted that girls had been exposed to unfair gender biases, as once in school it was not uncommon that they were punished to larger extent when doing something wrong than what boys were. In addition, it was also not uncommon that they were harassed at school. As such, it was noted through the study that these occurrences had impacted schooling for some of the girls, whereas for others it had not (Bisika et al. 2009:288-292).

5.3 Agricultural and Urban/Rural Settings

When it comes to Universal Primary Education, Riddell (2003) argues that there is inconsistency between the provisions of education to everyone at the same time as maintaining a good quality of education. This is due to the education systems not being properly developed for the UPE policies (Riddell 2003:16-17), which points to what Evans (2004) noted about institutional monocropping. Chisamya et al. (2012) noted that although the number of enrolments improved in the countries after the implementation of free primary education policies there are still slight issues with being able to provide universal primary education, with both governmental and individual constraints that are impeding that process (Chisamya et al. 2012: 745). These issues can be divided into demand and supply variations, where the demand is ascribed to the individual constraints whereas issues with supply are ascribed to the government (Al-Samarrai and Zaman

2007:364). Lewin (2011) argues that the problem that exists within the education sectors of developing countries do so in connection to each other, in that enrolment and completion numbers are impacted by the problems of education quality (Lewin 2011:5). Cremin and Goretti Nakabugo (2012) argues that although there is a focus on supplying education so that everybody have the chance to attain it, there should be significantly more focus on the quality of education, so that the students are adequately prepared and knowledgeable once they finish school and enter the labour market (Cremin & Goretti Nakabugo 2012:503). In connection, Birdsall et al. (2005) argued that the problem of children not completing school is not going be solved even if the quality deficits are being corrected, as there are larger institutional problems at that needs to be corrected as well (Birdsall et al. 2005:24).

Al-Samarrai and Zaman (2007) along with Bisika et al. (2009) noted that when it comes to reasons for high drop-out rates, these vary from financial costs, or prioritising of household work instead of education, to limited opportunities on the labour market after education, gender structures, or lack of quality of education (Al-Samarrai and Zaman 2007:364, Bisika et al. 2009:287). These are all factors that might explain the low completion rates when it comes to achieving universal primary education. However, these factors do not offer an understanding of why the completion rates are low. Chimombo (2005a) argues that education systems in Africa are based on Western principles of schooling in which the outcomes of an education are to be benefitted in a society based on modern principles. This creates an issue of educational outcomes being generated towards a context that has little relevance for many countries in Africa, particularly Malawi and Uganda as both are largely agricultural economies (Chimombo 2005a:137-142), with Uganda employing over 80 per cent of their labour force in agriculture while the number is over 90 per cent for Malawi (CIA Factbook Uganda 2013, CIA Factbook Malawi 2013). Ellis and Freeman (2004) did a case-study on rural livelihoods in five countries, two of them being Malawi and Uganda, and noted that resources of income in rural areas were generated primarily through self-subsistence activities, with household labour and education following behind. It was noted in the same study that the further away from local meeting points and services, the larger was the probability of self-subsistence farming (Ellis and Freeman 2004:13-17). This then suggests that as agricultural productivity is a large part of the livelihoods in both countries, the livelihoods might have an impact on the level of schooling that is attained.

In addition, in contrast to the perception of education bringing with it opportunities for a better living that was noted by Nuwagaba (2012:93) in the beginning of this paper, Chimombo (2005b) noted in his research that in many local communities in Malawi the perception on education contradicts the statement of education leading to enhanced opportunities. It is argued that many people in rural areas are dependent on the income that is generated into the household and as that has the first priority the result is that education comes in second hand. Furthermore, it is argued that the level of quality is low in general in Malawi as schools are not adequately equipped with material and textbooks, and lacks the facilities necessary in order to provide satisfactory education. As such, the demand for education declines as well. It is thus argued that there is little probability for people in rural areas of Malawi to move beyond primary school or even finish it, and if they do, they often have limited numeric and literacy skills. It was argued that the people in rural areas was aware of this fact and therefore chose to not send their children to school (Chimombo 2005b:168-169).

Another aspect that might help to explain the low completion rates is the urban and rural discrepancies that exist in both countries. As mentioned both Uganda and Malawi have large agricultural sectors, and consequently have large portions of the population living in rural areas, with only 13 per cent of the Ugandan population and 20 per cent of the population of Malawi living in urban areas (CIA Factbook Uganda 2013, CIA Factbook Malawi 2013). This then would presumably indicate that the focus of the UPE policies should be directed towards the rural areas as that is where most of the population are situated. However, Ekaju (2007) noted in his research on Uganda that the context in which the UPE policies were implemented differed across regions and that there was a concentration of education efforts towards the Central and West part of the country, areas that are considered as more affluent. The North and Western parts are seen as more conflict-ridden and unstable, which has led to people in those areas feeling as though they are not included in the same way as those in the more affluent areas. The villages of North and West Uganda are characterised by subsistence farming, and the levels of technology tend to be low, which have impacted schooling in these areas, as the education services tends to be of limited scale, teachers are not correctly educated and education supplies are limited. With a limitation in education in the North and Western areas and a concentration of education on the

East and Central areas, the levels of education are as a consequences better distributed and of better quality in the urban areas than to that of the rural areas of Uganda (Ekaju 2007: 41-44).

5.4 Relevance of Education for the Households and the Labour Market

Kadzamira and Rose (2003) noted in the case of Malawi that education can increase socio-economic levels and generate more opportunities if obtained, but argue that this only occurs when education beyond primary level has been obtained. A primary education will thus generate little prospect if not coupled with secondary education, which it was noted that only a small portion of those that finish primary school have opportunity to continue on to secondary school. As such, for many poor people the relevance of primary education for them on an individual level or within the family is questioned as they themselves are aware that primary educational attainment is not enough (Kadzamira & Rose 2003:513).

Similarly, Ekaju (2007) noted through his research of Uganda that people without a primary education had limited ability to enhance their position in society as a formal education is most often considered a prerequisite for obtaining a job in public and private sectors of the economy. However, informal education is the form of education that is taking place in most villages in Uganda, which then limits the opportunities for enhancement for people in the villages from the start (Ekaju 2007:47). Furthermore, Nuwagaba (2012) argued in his research that education in Uganda tend to be very much based on a theoretical basis, and not suitable to the labour market, which then leads to unemployment of those that have completed primary education. In addition, the labour market cannot facilitate jobs for everyone that graduate, which leads to high unemployment rates (Nuwagaba 2012:100). This can thus indicate why people choose not to continue in education, given the prospect that although primary education might be attained, there are no jobs available. The investments and sacrifices that go into education might not bring back any economic or social enhancement. Furthermore, Ekaju (2007) argues that poor people might not see the need to let their children partake in primary education as household work is considered more important if they are living on or below subsistence levels. In such cases, the outcomes that are generated from universal primary education are considered, and the view that is often held is that although primary education has been attained there are no place on the labour market for them (Ekaju 2007:50). In her study, Kakuru (2008) concluded that access and

completion of education are affected by unequal opportunities for learning due to there being a division of labour and ability to retain resources in the households, a situation that is particularly detrimental to girls (Kakuru 2008:45).

Chimombo (2005a) noted that the social and political climate have not been taken into consideration in the implementation process. Issues such as households being hesitant to the outcomes generated by education, and the disregard of the importance of more suitable forms of education such as informal or vocational training are only some of the problems that have not been raised. It is further argued that there are other forms of education that might be more appropriate for some people to partake in, as universal primary education is just part of the formal education system. Informal education is present to a large extent in many developing countries (Chimombo 2005a:136-142).

5.5 Gender Structures

UNDP (2007) noted in the case of Uganda that boys are favoured when it comes to educational attainment, which might be due to pre-existing cultural, social and traditional notions. In many developing countries the cultural norms ascribe that the expectations of education are less for girls than for boys. This then generates that boys are favoured to partake in education, as girls are expected to be more involved in work in the household than what boys are. The fact that girls are disadvantaged when it comes to education and the expectation of it might in part be due to the fact that girls can be seen as inferior to boys, which consequently leads to differences of educational attainment between boys and girls. In addition, the expected outcomes generated from education often ascribes to enhanced participation of the formal sector, a sector that is less accessible for girls. This then creates a disincentive for households to send their daughters to school (UNDP 2007).

Chisamy (2012) argues that the gender structures look similar in Malawi, as there are often limited opportunities for women to become a part of formal structures in many communities in the country. Education can be seen as a threat towards the traditional roles that women are perceived to hold and it is common for women to partake in activities that entail care work, whereas it is more common for men to participate in formal wage work. This is then creating a

divide of what is perceived as feminized and masculinised labour. Consequently, although there are more numbers of girls enrolling in primary and even secondary education after the implementation of UPE, there are still unequal gender relations that are impacting the outcome of education. In light of this, the expectation on education is lower for girls than for boys, a factor that might give a reason for the difference between the attainment of education between girls and boys. Furthermore, another matter that was seen in Malawi was that of girls attaining both primary and secondary education, but ending up as unemployed, as their gender structures do not facilitate them to take part in the formal market (Chisamya 2012: 748-753).

6. Conclusion

The question that was raised in the beginning of the paper was what contextual factors that might underlie the low completion rates of Universal Primary Education in Malawi and Uganda. The analysis of the situation of Universal Primary Education in Malawi and Uganda noted that these factors can range from financial and social ones, to inherent gender structures. Furthermore, it was noted that the theory of institutional monocropping might also underlie the low completion rates. Just as the theory assumed, the analysis showed that the context of the two countries had not been taken into consideration with the implementation of policies. The fact that both Malawi and Uganda are predominately agricultural economies raises the question of the relevance of education for those that are largely dependent on subsistence farming, as the outcomes generated from education are aimed towards a more modern sector. Furthermore, research showed that in order to reap the benefits of education that have been ascribed by international organisations and governments alike, education beyond primary level must in many cases be attained. For many poor families this becomes a problem as they face the loss of a productive member of the household when a child is sent to school.

In addition, the implementation of UPE policies were seen to impact the quality of education of both countries, as there was a focus on quantitative attainment which led to the quality being affected in order to try to accommodate the needs of the students. This fact did not go unnoticed by people partaking in education, and further raised the question of relevance of education to the labour market. Due to the factors being similar in both Uganda and Malawi it was difficult to

contrast between the two, but it was shown that both countries are experiencing similar issues in connection to universal primary education and the factors that underlie the low completion rates seems to be the same.

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