

**Teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under Universal Primary
Education in Uganda and its implications for emerging practices**

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda. It draws on empirical research conducted in two UPE case study schools in Uganda. The study was conducted in order to highlight the role of teacher agency in teachers' professional practice and to analyse the ecological factors that contribute in shaping it, as well as its effects.

The thesis begins with a description of the UPE curriculum in its global dimensions. It subsequently reviews the theoretical and empirical literature dealing with the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE, under the themes of 'globalisation', 'teacher/biographical barriers to UPE reforms', 'contextual challenges of the reforms on teachers', 'teachers' mediation of the reform challenges' and 'effects of the teachers' mediation of reforms'.

The study's theoretical position draws on the critical realist philosophy of Roy Bhaskar and Margaret Archer, which guided the development a two-phased study design comprising of secondary document analysis using retroduction (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014) in phase one and field work within the framework of Priestley et al.'s (2015b) ecological approach to teacher agency in phase two. The field work involved semi-structured interviews, observation and primary document analysis.

The study established that the globalisation of UPE was driven by Education for All (EFA) under a neo-liberal agenda, which involved both structural and cultural reform. The structural reform has impacted UPE's ecology through the evolution of a new 'governance' structure underpinned by partnership, decentralisation and performativity. Furthermore, it has involved access and inputs reform, which has been characterised by universalisation and the adoption of a partnership funding approach. Cultural reform has focused on curriculum and pedagogy. However, at the micro level of school/classroom practice, most of the reforms have resulted in 'first order' changes (Cuban 1998; Priestley 2011a), which are currently manifested by only partial success in absorbing the curriculum and pedagogy reforms, coupled with the continued lack of inputs. This is attributed, among others, to the responses of the teachers, or teacher agency.

The study analysed the role of teacher agency in the case studies and concluded that it is widely manifested and is primarily driven by the practical-evaluative dimension, followed by the projective and iterative dimensions respectively. Furthermore, it has significant effects, which are both positive and negative. It therefore plays a significant role in the teachers' professional practice, which needs to be acknowledged in educational planning. Finally, the study offered some recommendations and suggestions for further research.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wife and children

Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background to the study	4
1.3 Problem statement.....	8
1.4 Research aims	9
1.5 Research questions.....	9
1.6 Purpose of the Study	10
1.7 Significance of the study.....	10
1.8 Overview of the thesis	11
2 THE UPE CURRICULUM	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 The international context	13
2.2.1 Global education discourses	13
2.3 The national context.....	15
2.3.1 Central government mechanisms.....	15
2.3.1.1 The Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) 1992	16
2.3.1.2 Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) 1998 – 2003	16
2.3.1.3 Teacher Development Management System (TDMS).....	17
2.3.1.4 Instructional Materials Unit	17
2.4 The local government context.....	18
2.4.1 Decentralisation mechanisms	18
2.4.1.1 UPE capitation grant.....	19
2.4.1.2 School facilities grant (SFG)	19
2.5 The school context.....	19
2.5.1 UPE policies	21

2.5.1.1 Thematic curriculum	21
2.5.1.2 Local language teaching	21
2.5.1.3 Automatic promotion	22
2.5.1.4 Child rights policy.....	22
2.5.1.5 School/entry age intervention	22
2.5.1.6 School feeding policy	23
2.5.1.7 Customised performance targets (CPT).....	23
2.6 Conclusion	23
3 LITERATURE REVIEW	25
3.1 Introduction.....	25
3.2 Universal Primary Education.....	25
3.3 Teacher agency	26
3.4 Curriculum	28
3.5 Curriculum reform	29
3.6 Globalisation.....	32
3.7 Teacher/biographical barriers to UPE reforms	36
3.8 Contextual challenges of the reforms on teachers	39
3.9 Teachers' mediation of the reform challenges.....	42
3.10 Effects of the teachers' mediation of reforms.....	44
3.11 Conclusion	45
4 METHODOLOGY	47
4.1 Introduction.....	47
4.2 Theoretical framework.....	47
4.2.1 Critical realism.....	48
4.2.1.1 Entities	51
4.2.1.2 Emergence.....	52
4.2.1.3 Causal power.....	53

4.2.1.4 Causal mechanisms	53
4.2.2 Agency	55
4.2.3 The chordal triad of agency	57
4.2.4 Social Structure	58
4.2.5 Culture	60
4.3 Methodology	61
4.3.1 Thijs and Van den Akker's layers of curriculum making.....	63
4.3.2 Retrodution.....	66
4.3.3 Teacher agency - ecological approach.....	67
4.4 Integrated analytical framework	69
4.5 Study design.....	71
4.5.1 Phase one – secondary document analysis	71
4.5.1.1 Secondary document collection	71
4.5.1.2 Analysis using retrodution	73
4.5.2 Phase two – field work.....	73
4.5.2.1 Sampling procedure	74
4.5.2.2 Sample selection	75
4.5.2.3 Data collection	75
4.5.2.3.1 Interviews.....	76
4.5.2.3.2 Observation.....	77
4.5.2.3.3 Documents	77
4.6 Triangulation.....	77
4.7 Analysis of the field work data	78
4.8 Ethical considerations	78
4.8.1 Ethical approval	79
4.8.2 Informed consent	79
4.8.3 Confidentiality	79

4.9 Conclusion	80
5 THE GLOBALISATION OF UPE.....	81
5.1 Introduction.....	81
5.2 Background to the globalisation of UPE	81
5.3 Structure.....	84
5.3.1 Governance reform	84
5.3.2 Access reform	86
5.3.2.1 Age-in-grade access	88
5.3.3 Inputs reform.....	88
5.4 Culture.....	91
5.4.1 Curriculum reform	91
5.4.2 ‘Rights’ reform.....	93
5.5 Conclusion	94
6 THE CONTEMPORARY REFORM CONTEXT OF UPE.....	95
6.1 Introduction.....	95
6.2 Macro layer	95
6.2.1 The continuing ‘struggle’ with structure.....	95
6.2.2 Culture – the dissemination gap.....	97
6.3 The meso layer.....	98
6.3.1 Emerging new structures.....	98
6.3.2 ‘First order’ changes in culture	103
6.3.3 Conclusion	111
7 ECOLOGY OF MIREMBE.....	113
7.1 Introduction.....	113
7.2 Profile of Mirembe Primary School.....	113
7.3 Context of Mirembe.....	116
7.3.1 Structure.....	116

7.3.2 Culture	122
7.4 Biographies of the participant teachers.....	126
7.4.1 Christine.....	126
7.4.2 Aisha	130
7.4.3 David.....	134
7.5 Conclusion	137
8 ECOLOGY OF ELGONIA	139
8.1 Introduction.....	139
8.2 Profile of Elgonia Primary School.....	139
8.3 Context of Elgonia	141
8.3.1 Structure.....	141
8.3.2 Culture	146
8.4 Biographies of the participant teachers.....	149
8.4.1 Juliet.....	149
8.4.2 Robert.....	152
8.4.3 Charles	154
8.5 Conclusion	158
9 TEACHER AGENCY UNDER UPE	159
9.1 Introduction.....	159
9.2 Analytical objectives.....	159
9.3 Outline of teacher agency in the case studies	160
9.4 Iterational dimension	161
9.5 Projective dimension.....	162
9.6 Practical-evaluative dimension	168
9.7 Effects of the teachers' agency on UPE.....	173
9.8 Conclusion	174
10 CONCLUSIONS	177

10. 1 Introduction.....	177
10.2 Summary of findings.....	177
10.2.1 The globalisation of UPE.....	177
10.2.2 ‘First order’ changes in the contemporary context	178
10.2.3 Teachers’ responses to the changes	179
10.2.4 Teacher agency	179
10.3 Recommendations.....	180
10.3.1 Biographical factors	180
10.3.2 Contextual factors	181
10.4 Limitations of the study	182
10.5 Proposed areas for future research.....	183
10.6 Final remarks	183
Endnotes.....	185
REFERENCES	187
APPENDIX ONE.....	207
APPENDIX TWO.....	208
APPENDIX THREE.....	210

List of Tables

Table 1: Bhaskar’s domains of reality (Source: Bhaskar 2008, p. 47)	50
Table 2: Curriculum levels and curriculum products (Source: Thijs and Van den Akker 2009, p.9)	63
Table 3: Secondary documents for global basic education/UPE	72

List of Figures

Figure 1: An iceberg metaphor for critical realism ontology (Source: Fletcher 2016, p. 3)	51
Figure 2: Global context of UPE	65
Figure 3: Teacher agency (Source Priestley et al. 2015, p. 30)	68
Figure 4: Integrated analytical framework.....	70

List of abbreviations

ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CCT	Centre Coordinating Tutor
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DED	District Education Department
DEO	District Education officer
DES	Directorate of Education Standards
DFID	Department for International Development
DIS	District Inspector of Schools
DLB	District Language Board
DSC	District Service Commission
EFA	Education for All
EFAG	Education Funding Agencies Group
ESCC	Education Sector Consultative Committee
ESIP	Education Sector Investment Plan
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
EVAC	End Violence Against Children
FTI	Fast Track Initiative (now Global Partnership for Education – GPE)
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GOU	Government of Uganda
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation Agency
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor countries
IOB	Policy and Operation Evaluation Department - Netherlands
IMU	Instructional Materials Unit
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education

LARA	Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity
LOI	Language of Instruction
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PETDP	Primary Education and Teacher Development Plan
PGM	Parents' General Meeting
PLE	Primary Leaving Examinations
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
PTC	Primary Teachers College
PTDMP	Primary Teacher Development and Management Plan
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
RTE	Right to Education
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SACCO	Saving and Credit Cooperative Organisation
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring and Education Quality
SHARP	School Health and Reading Program
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
SMC	School Management Committee
STC	Save the Children
TDMS	Teacher Development Management System
TIU	Transparency International – Uganda
UN	United Nation
UNATU	Uganda National Teachers Union
UNC for UNESCO	Uganda National Commission for UNESCO
UNEB	Uganda National Examination Board

UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Teacher agency is an integral part of teacher professionalism that is increasingly gaining recognition in the field of education (Priestley et al. 2015; Pyhältö et al. 2014; Pantić 2015). Biesta et al. (2015, p 624) contend that it is ‘important to understand the dynamics of teacher agency and the factors that contribute to its promotion and enhancement’. This study seeks to explore the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda using the ecological approach (Priestley et al. 2015). UPE has been defined as ‘a system of universal, compulsory and free primary education for all’ (UNESCO 2014). It was launched in Uganda in 1997 under the framework of the Education Sector Investment Plan (1998 – 2003), which involved governance, access, inputs and curriculum reform (see chapters 2 and 5 for a detailed discussion).

The ecological approach conceptualises teacher agency as a ‘situated achievement’, which is ‘the outcome of the interplay of iterational, practical-evaluative and projective dimensions’ (ibid., p. 29). In other words, teacher agency is what teachers achieve in the temporal-relational contexts-of-practice of their schools through the interplay of their professional/life histories and aspirations with its contextual properties, leading either to the transformation or reproduction of its ‘problematic’ aspects. Despite the growing acknowledgement of its importance (Priestley 2013; Priestley et al. 2015; Pantić 2015; Biesta et al. 2015), teacher agency has not received the wide scholarly attention that it deserves. Thus, Vongalis-Macrow (2007, p 425) earlier argued that it ‘stands largely unexamined in educational policy’, while Lipponen and Kumpulainen (2011, p 813) noted that ‘few empirical studies have been conducted on agency, and only a few focused explicitly on teacher education and agency’. However, this anomaly is now being redressed through studies such as Priestley et al.’s (2015) ecological approach, Pyhalto et al.’s (2014) study on teachers’ professional agency and Vaughn’s (2013) study on vision in teacher agency. Thus, Priestley et al. (2015, p. 1) suggest that ‘there is an emerging tendency in educational policy ... to acknowledge the importance of teachers’ agency’.

However, it is generally acknowledged that the worldwide study of teacher agency remains ‘vague’ (Priestley et al. 2015; Pyhalto et al. 2014), most especially in the global south. In Uganda, in particular, Abiria et al. (2013, p. 582) noted following their study of plurilingual practices that ‘teachers are exercising agency and creating innovative possibilities for the students to become more successful learners’, and yet a concerted study of teacher agency has never been attempted. By interrogating its role under UPE, this study therefore seeks to contribute in highlighting the importance of teachers’ agency in their professional practice, as well as towards the progress being made in its study. This is intended to contribute towards a better understanding of this crucial aspect of teacher professionalism, as well as towards its literature.

The ecological approach (Priestley et al. 2015) contends that teacher agency is shaped by means of contextual and biographical factors. Under UPE the contextual factors include culture (Elder-Vass 2008) for example, policies such as thematic curriculum and artefacts such as administrative documents, while structure (Porpora 1989) includes roles, relationships and resources. Biographical factors (Priestley et al. 2015) include teachers’ attributes such as qualifications, skill, beliefs and attitude. As a preliminary step in elucidating the role of teacher agency, this study aims to interrogate and highlight the contextual and biographical factors that are involved in shaping it. This will contribute to a better understanding of what shapes teacher agency under UPE and thus provide data towards interrogating its implications.

The UPE environment in Uganda has ‘changed significantly’ over the last two decades (Altinyelken 2010a; Penny et al. 2008), akin to what has occurred the world over, which has been termed an ‘epidemic’ of change (Levin 1998). Some scholars have attributed such changes to globalisation (Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008; Higgins and Rwanyange 2005; Priestley 2002; Ball et al. 2012). In Uganda this has involved among others, structural and cultural reforms such as a governance based on partnership, inputs reform and curriculum reforms such as local language teaching and automatic promotion (see sections 2.5.1.2 and 2.5.1.3, and chapter 5) (MoES 1999; Ward et al. 2006; World Bank 2002a; Kayabwe 2014; Penny et al. 2008). UPE teachers have undoubtedly played a significant role in these reforms. The role of teachers as ‘agents of change’ in mediating reforms has been noted in several studies (Priestley 2013; Priestley et al. 2012; Ball et al.

2012; Osborn et al. 1997; Ketelaar et al. 2012; Pyhältö et al. 2014; Higgins and Rwanyange 2005). Osborn et al (1997, pp. 53 - 54) suggest that:

the ability to mediate is a feature of teaching as a profession ... When confronted with change, and in particular with reform imposed from above, a proportion of teachers in many countries, even those working in highly prescriptive, centrally controlled systems, will respond by subverting, mediating, reinventing or developing an innovative response.

Similarly, Ketelaar et al. (2012, p. 273) observe that:

it is not a matter of simply accepting or rejecting what has been imposed: teachers actively position themselves in relation to an innovation. They make deliberate choices and compare their personal beliefs, desires and values in work with the characteristics and demands of the proposed changes.

In a similar vein, some studies have highlighted the responses of UPE teachers' in mediating reforms. For instance, Lewin (2009), echoing several Ugandan government reports (MoES 2014a; MoES 2014b; MoES 2015) notes that teachers are maintaining the practice of repetition, despite the automatic promotion policy (see section 2.5.1.3). Similarly, Piper (2010) notes that some teachers in rural areas are reverting to teaching lower primary in English, despite the local language teaching policy (see section 2.5.1.2). However, these are isolated studies and a sustained investigation has never been done. The responses of teachers in mediating reforms therefore constitutes an important dimension that this study aims to interrogate.

The effects of UPE teachers' mediation of reforms have been significant. For example, from a negative perspective, the practice of repetition is estimated to cost at least 57 percent of the scarce education resources in Uganda (MoES 2014a; CREATE 2011; Lewin 2009). Similarly, the teachers' practice of increasing the duration of some subject lessons to allow for learner participation has been noted to undermine wholesome delivery of the curriculum (Nakabugo et al. 2008; Altinyelken 2010a). On the other hand, the teachers' initiatives in making their own teaching materials has been noted to reduce

their dependency on materials provided by schools (Nakabugo et al. 2008). However, these constitute isolated studies and an in-depth research has never been done, which this study aims to redress.

1.2 Background to the study

UPE in Uganda constitutes the focus of this study. Its establishment has been attributed to globalisation (Higgins and Rwanyange 2005; Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008; UNESCO 1990a) (see chapter 5 for a detailed discussion). This was accomplished by Education for All (EFA) in partnership with the Ugandan government. In this pursuit, EFA relied on its discourses which include building partnerships; universalisation and equity; a focus on learning; broadening the scope and methods of basic education; and enhancing the learning environment (UNESCO 1990a; see also Altinyelken unpublished).

EFA embraced two strategies with regard to ‘building partnerships’; 1] building partnerships among countries at international level and 2] building multi-sectoral partnerships within countries (Draxler 2008; UNESCO 1990a; UNESCO 1990b). It subsequently built a partnership with the Ugandan government, which was vested in the Education Sector Consultative Committee (ESCC) and the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG) (Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2006). These organs formulated and implemented Uganda’s Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) (1998 – 2003) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (2004 – 2015; 2007 – 2010 & 2010 - 2015) (MoES 1998; MoES 2004a; MoES 2008b; MoES 2010; Ward et al. 2006). The Ugandan government, in turn, built a partnership with its local governments through the decentralisation of UPE (MoES 1999; Kayabwe 2014; Suzuki 2002; Ward et al. 2006).

However, the process has involved several challenges. For example, EFA adopted conditionalities in its partnership with the Ugandan government such as the World Bank’s ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper’ (PRSP), Fast Track Initiative’s (FTI) ‘indicative benchmarks’ and the Sector Wide Approach (SWAP), which did not take full account of local realities (World Bank 2004; Bermingham 2011; Rose 2005; Penny et al. 2008).

Ward et al. (2003) note that due to UPE's governance challenges, agreements were made on unfeasible and impractical education reforms including some ESIP targets and curriculum reforms. Furthermore, the reforms were driven by EFA and the central government and failed to meaningfully integrate all stakeholders. Thus, Higgins and Rwanyangye (2005, p. 19) note that teachers 'feel marginalised from shaping of the reform process and feel that they are seen as implementers rather than co-shapers of policy', which has undermined their ownership and motivation (MoES 2014a; MoES 2014b; Altinyelken unpublished). Decentralisation, in turn, experienced challenges such as corruption and delays in transmitting funds, which has undermined the delivery of school inputs (Kayabwe 2014; Penny et al. 2008; Ward et al. 2006). Thus, teachers are responding in agentic ways such as lobbying through their union (MoES 2014a).

As regards 'universalisation and equity', EFA aimed to ensure that basic education of quality is provided to all. However, due to the modalities of its implementation, universalisation has engendered significant challenges. For example, under its 'big bang' approach (World Bank 2002b; Zuze and Leibbrandt 2011), UPE was launched with a policy of four children per household due to insufficient infrastructure, trained teachers and scholastic materials (MoES 1999; Ward et al. 2006). However, this was abandoned in 2003, when government opened access for all children (Nishimura et al. 2009). Furthermore, UPE's enrolment system is blamed for its failure to ensure 'age-in-grade access' or 'admission and progression at an appropriate age' (CREATE 2011, p. 10) (see Grogan unpublished; Lewin 2009).

This has led to a massive increase in enrolment from approximately 3 million pupils in 1996 to approximately 7 million in 2004, to 8.3 million in 2016, which has overwhelmed the available facilities (MoES 2004b; Ward et al. 2006; MoES 2015). This has led, in turn, to overcrowding and a sharp decline in quality, which is undermining teaching and learning (Byamugisha and Ogawa 2010; Altinyelken 2010b). This has elicited agentic responses from teachers who are adopting strategies such as 'whole-class' teaching and 'co-teaching' (Nakabugo et al. 2008; O'Sullivan 2006).

With regard to its 'focus on learning' discourse, EFA adopted four benchmarks, namely to 1] improve the preparation and motivation of teachers; 2] define the acceptable levels

of learning acquisition; 3] improve the process and conditions for learning; and 4] improve and apply systems of assessing learning achievement (UNESCO 1990a; UNESCO 1990b). In pursuit of improving the preparation and motivation of teachers, EFA launched the Teacher Development Management System (TDMS) in Uganda (USAID 2003), which aimed at transforming the training and management of teachers. However, Uganda continues to face a severe shortage of teachers (Deininger 2003; Oonyu 2012; MoES 2014b). Furthermore, teacher training has not adequately addressed new pedagogical requirements, which has left many teachers ill-equipped to implement UPE (Altinyelken 2010a; 2010b; Abiria et al. 2013; Penny et al. 2008). However, they are currently responding in agentic ways, for example by adopting ‘translating’ and ‘translanguaging’ for local language teaching (Abiria et al. 2013).

Pertaining to the goal of improving the process and conditions for learning, EFA advocated for curriculum reform in its partner countries. Thus, Uganda adopted the outcomes-based thematic curriculum in 2007, with a bias towards large class teaching (Altinyelken 2010a; Ward et al. 2006; Altinyelken unpublished; Penny et al. 2008). However, teachers have criticised the curriculum’s shortcomings especially its heavy workload, which requires them to teach eight learning areas per day, practise child-centred pedagogy and continuous assessment (Altinyelken unpublished). Consequently, they are responding largely by ignoring continuous assessment, which is hard to practise in their large classes (Altinyelken unpublished). Furthermore, they are increasing the lesson duration of some key subjects to allow for learner participation and skipping others considered less important such as news and physical education (Altinyelken 2010a; 2010b; Nakabugo 2008).

With respect to the provision of essential school inputs (UNESCO 1990b), EFA developed mechanisms for UPE such as the instructional materials unit (IMU) to supply instructional materials, the school facilities grant (SFG) for infrastructure construction and the UPE capitation grant for operational expenditure (Ward et al. 2006; Oonyu 2012). However, due to the shortage of funding, the majority of UPE schools remain under-resourced and are characterised by shortages of classrooms, teachers’ accommodation, furniture and instructional materials (Penny et al. 2008; Ward et al. 2003). This has created significant difficulties for teachers who are exercising agency, for example, by

walking the long distances from their homes to school daily due to the lack of school accommodation (MoES 2009).

As regards assessing learning achievement, EFA established mechanisms such as SACMEQ (The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring and Education Quality), UWEZO and NAPE (National Assessment of Progress in Education) (Byamugisha and Ssenabulya 2005; NAPE 2012; UWEZO Uganda 2012). Thus, Uganda conducts periodic assessments under these organs, in addition to its high stakes primary leaving exams (PLE) (MoES 2014a; NAPE 2012). However, the excessive performativity has created significant stress for UPE teachers (Altinyelken 2010b; Lewin 2009). Thus, they are responding in various ways, for example, by advising pupils to repeat classes when they consider them unlikely to do well (Lewin 2009).

Furthermore, in pursuing its aim of enhancing the right to education (UNESCO 1990a; 2007), EFA partnered with the Ugandan government through its Child Friendly Basic Education and Learning programme (CFBEL) and The Right of All Children to Education (TRACE) programme, which attempted to redress discrimination and harassment in schools. This culminated in the ban on corporal punishment in 2006 (UNICEF 2010; UNESCO 2003/4). However, a recent study indicates that there is still widespread use of abusive punishment by teachers, which includes caning, forcing pupils to stare at the sun, carrying big stones and pinching (MoES 2015).

In pursuit of its language of instruction (LOI) goal, EFA further advocated for Uganda's adoption of mother tongue teaching (UNESCO 1951; UNESCO 1953; UNESCO 1961; Abadzi 2006; Ball 2011). Thus, it was recommended by Uganda's Education Policy Review Commission 1987 (EPRC) and subsequently passed in 1999 (GOU 1992; Ward et al. 2006). However, it has engendered significant challenges due to Uganda's high number of local languages, most of which lack written orthographies and supportive literature (Ward et al. 2006; see also Piper 2010; Altinyelken unpublished; Penny 2008). In addition, most teachers have not been trained to teach in these languages (Abiria et al. 2013; Altinyelken unpublished). However, they are currently responding in agentic ways, for example, through 'translanguaging' and 'translating' as highlighted earlier.

As regards enhancing the learning environment, EFA aims at fostering conducive health and environmental conditions in order to improve pupil readiness, progression and learning outcomes. Consequently, it partnered with the Ugandan government through programmes such as Food for Education (FFE) and The Right of All Children to Education (TRACE), which have contributed in raising awareness among stakeholders (World Bank 2013a; Adelman et al. unpublished; UNICEF 2010). However, many parents are not yet complying fully with their responsibilities such as providing school meals for their children (Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014; Nishimura et al. 2009). Thus, teachers are responding, for example, by mobilising them to fulfil their responsibility (World Bank 2013a).

Despite the significant evidence of agency by UPE teachers in response to EFA's reforms highlighted above, it has never been subjected to any comprehensive research. It is therefore the goal of this study to interrogate the teachers' agency further.

1.3 Problem statement

Uganda launched Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997, marking her inclusion in Education for All's (EFA) globalisation programme for basic education, which commenced in Jomtein in 1990 (UNESCO 1990a; MoES 1999; Ward et al. 2006). UPE has subsequently undergone reform through the Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). However, in many cases, the wide-ranging reforms have not met the expected outcomes (Ward et al. 2003; Lewin 2009; Nakabugo et al. 2008; Altinyelken 2010a; Higgins and Rwanyange 2005), culminating mainly in 'first order' changes (Priestley 2011a; Cuban 1998). This has partly been attributed to their mediation by teachers (Lewin 2009; Altinyelken 2010a), or in other words 'teacher agency' (Priestley et al. 2015).

Despite being well-known, teacher agency has not received the wide attention that it deserves (Priestley 2013; Priestley et al. 2015; Pantic 2015; Biesta et al. 2015). Thus, neither was it considered in the process of implementing UPE reforms. However, based on its prevalence, as well as significant effects on UPE (Altinyelken 2010a; 2010b; Abiria

et al. 2013; Nakabugo 2008; Lewin 2009; O’Sullivan 2006), this study deemed it important to interrogate its role in teachers’ professional practice under UPE, particularly in the context of reform. The findings are expected to enhance understanding of teacher agency as a phenomenon, elucidate its role on UPE reform and contribute towards its literature, all of which may further help in informing policy making and implementation.

1.4 Research aims

The study was guided by the following aims:

1. To analyse the emerging changes in the curriculum under UPE reform in Uganda.
2. To analyse how teachers are responding to the curriculum changes
3. To analyse the emerging features of teacher agency as manifested in their responses to curriculum reform
4. To establish the factors that are shaping teacher agency under UPE
5. To establish the effects of teacher agency on the UPE reforms

1.5 Research questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the emerging changes in the curriculum under UPE reform in Uganda?
2. How are teachers responding to the curriculum changes?
3. What are the emerging features of teacher agency as manifested in their responses to curriculum reform?
4. What factors are shaping teacher agency under UPE?
5. What are the effects of teacher agency on UPE?

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE in Uganda. I did this through exploring the role of UPE teachers in mediating the reforms in two case study schools. I drew on a sample of six UPE teachers, as well as twelve other participants representing each of the other curriculum layers. I conducted the study in two phases. In phase one, I commenced by undertaking secondary document analysis using retroduction (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014) in order to establish the contextual changes which have occurred under UPE due to EFA's reforms. In phase two, I conducted field work within the framework of the ecological approach to teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2015) in order to establish how UPE teachers are responding to the contextual challenges in their school, thus achieving agency. My aim was to identify the manifestations of teacher agency in the case studies, factors that are shaping it, as well as its effects.

1.7 Significance of the study

There are currently no studies which focus specifically on teacher agency in the global south, let alone Uganda. Thus, this study constitutes a pioneer effort. By focusing on the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE, this study may contribute to the following:

1. Improved understanding of teacher agency as a phenomenon.
2. Improved understanding and management of teachers' enactment of reforms and therefore to improved practices.
3. In the light of the above contributions, it may further lead to the improvement of quality and achievement under UPE, in line with global development commitments such as United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four.

It is therefore anticipated that this study may be beneficial to the following sets of stakeholders:

1. Policy makers at the international and national levels for example Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) Uganda.
2. Policy implementers at the local government level for example district education officers (DEOs) and school management committees (SMCs).
3. Policy practitioners for example teachers
4. Academics, researchers and UPE students.

1.8 Overview of the thesis

Chapter 1 introduces and contextualises the study. Chapter 2 describes the UPE curriculum in its global dimensions, commencing with its international context, through the national, local government, down to the school context. Chapter 3 reviews the theoretical and empirical literature dealing with the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE in Uganda. The key debates are addressed under the themes of ‘globalisation’, ‘teacher/biographical barriers to UPE reforms’, ‘contextual challenges of the reforms on teachers’, ‘teachers’ mediation of the reform challenges’ and ‘effects of the teachers’ mediation of reforms’.

Chapter 4 explores the study’s methodology including its theoretical framework, methodology, study design and ethical considerations. It commences by explicating the study’s theoretical framework and thereafter explains how this guides the development of its other methodological components. It further examines the study’s ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 undertakes a retrospective analysis of UPE reform in order to establish its ecological properties. It commences by stratifying the curriculum using Thijs and Van den Akker’s typology (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009) to enable a more focused inquiry into each layer. It subsequently employs retroduction to interrogate the secondary data about global basic education, in order to establish the antecedent properties of UPE and its role in shaping teacher agency.

Chapter 6 analyses the contemporary ecology of UPE as elicited by the field work data. It draws on the data regarding the macro and meso layers in order to establish the changes which have occurred under UPE. Chapters 7 and 8, in turn, interrogate the ecology of each case study i.e. their contextual, as well as biographical properties, as established from the field work data. Furthermore, they each attempt to highlight the role of teacher agency in each case study.

Chapter 9 turns to analysing teacher agency in the case studies using the ecological approach. It draws on the broader findings of UPE's ecology in the supra, macro and meso layers, established in the earlier chapters. Against that rich background, it focuses on identifying the manifestations of teacher agency in the case studies, the factors that are shaping it, as well as its effects. Finally, in chapter 10, I present the conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

2 THE UPE CURRICULUM

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the UPE curriculum in its global dimensions. I commence by explicating its international context, through the national, local government, down to the school context. My goal is to highlight its global, multi-layered structure and thus enable its better understanding. This detailed description aims at supporting the discussion of its globalisation in chapter five, as well as the analysis of its influence on teacher agency in the subsequent chapters, all of which are undertaken within the framework of Thijs and Van den Akker's typology (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009) (see section 4.3.1).

2.2 The international context

The international/intergovernmental context of UPE is constituted by EFA, which was formed at the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) at Jomtein in 1990 (UNESCO 1990a). At its formation, EFA comprised of its core sponsors which included UNESCO, World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, nineteen-member states, the E-9 Initiative, the OECD, civil society and private sector organisations. It was originally called EFA High Level Group but was subsequently renamed the EFA Steering Committee (UNESCO 2008; UNESCO 2015a). Its principal role lies in policy formulation, dissemination, monitoring and support. Its role is currently being led by Global Partnership for Education (UNESCO 2015a)

2.2.1 Global education discourses

In its role, EFA is guided by its discourses which include universalising access and equity; building partnerships and alliances to work towards meeting basic learning needs of all; a focus on learning; enhancing the learning environment; and broadening the scope and method of basic education (UNESCO 1990a; Altinyelken unpublished).

‘Universalising access and equity’ has been articulated as EFA’s overriding discourse. It originates from both EFA’s human capital development discourse, as well as the ‘right to education’ discourse (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991; UNESCO 1990b; Birdsall and Levine 2005; UNESCO 2007; UNICEF 2010). It advocates that basic education of quality should be provided to all and measures must be taken to reduce disparities, especially those which arise from the discrimination against females and minorities (UNESCO 1990a; 1990b). It is therefore underpinned by economic imperatives such as productivity, income and life expectancy (UNESCO 1990a; UNESCO 1990b; Lockheed and Verspoor 1991), as well as the rights imperatives implicated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNESCO 2007; UNICEF 2010; Right to Education Project 2012).

With regard to ‘building partnerships’, EFA focuses on governance under two strategies; 1] building partnerships among countries at international level and 2] building multi-sectoral partnerships within countries (UNESCO 1990a; UNESCO 1990b; UNESCO 2008). EFA’s international partnerships are targeted at the exchange of information, innovations and collaborations, as well as providing technical and financial support (UNESCO 1990a; UNESCO 2008). National partnerships aim to involve all sub-sectors and forms of education, family and community organisations, non-governmental organisations, teachers’ unions, the media, political parties, higher education and religious bodies in order to harmonise activities, mobilise and utilise resources more effectively (UNESCO 1990a).

The aim of EFA’s ‘focus on learning’ discourse is to promote education quality. It is underpinned by four benchmarks, namely, to 1] improve the preparation and motivation of teachers, 2] define the acceptable levels of learning acquisition, 3] improve and apply systems of assessing learning achievement and 4] improve the process and conditions for learning. Under the latter, EFA aims at enhancing the availability of educational inputs and promoting active, participatory learning approaches (UNESCO 1990a; 1990b).

Pertaining to its ‘enhancing the learning environment’ discourse, EFA aims at fostering conducive health and environmental conditions in order to improve readiness, progression and learning outcomes (UNESCO 1990a; World Bank 2013a; Jukes 2006).

EFA pursues this through promoting early childhood care and education (ECCE), nutrition, health and community education programmes.

Finally, EFA's 'broadening the means and scope of basic education' discourse represents the venture to deliver basic education through 'supplementary' channels such as learning activities in clubs, libraries, the mass media, youth and adult programmes (UNESCO 1990b). It is based on the growing needs and challenges of access to education.

2.3 The national context

The national context of UPE is constituted by the line Ministry of Education and Sports and its sub-agencies; National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) and the Directorate of Education Standards (DES). NCDC is responsible for curriculum and instructional materials development. UNEB is responsible for conducting national assessments and DES is responsible for schools' inspection. The national context is overseen by ESCC and EFAG, which were formed out of EFA's partnership with the Ugandan government. ESCC comprises of EFA's representatives, parliament, president's office, office of the prime minister, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, district officers, teachers and religious institutions, among others. EFAG, in turn, comprises of representatives of UNESCO, the World Bank, USAID, DFID, DANIDA, Ireland AID, GTZ, JICA, Plan International, Save the Children and World Education (Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2006). The principal role of the national context lies in policy adoption, dissemination and monitoring.

2.3.1 Central government mechanisms

Education functions nationally are set out in mechanisms such as the Government White Paper on Education 1992 (GWPE), the Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP)/Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), Teacher Development Management System (TDMS) and the Instructional Materials Unit (IMU), among others. These are briefly discussed below.

2.3.1.1 The Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) 1992

The Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) (GOU 1992) was derived from the recommendations of the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) 1987. It has guided extensive reforms to the legal framework of education, as well as to curriculum reform. This includes enacting the law which embedded the ‘right to education’ in the 1995 Constitution, the Local Government Act 1997 and the revised School Management Committee Regulations 2000 (MoES 2001). Furthermore, it ratified curriculum reforms such as mother tongue teaching and a vocation-oriented curriculum. However, the process of its adaptation has been criticised for failing to integrate all stakeholders. Higgins and Rwanyange (2005) note that key players such as teachers, parents, head teachers and pupils have had few channels through which to influence policy. Abiria et al (2013, p. 583) note a teacher’s complaint that:

next time ... they have to come first to the classroom level to the resource people so that they can get the real information rather than making policy there ... so that they don’t leave it to those at the grassroots to suffer.

Mbabazi et al (unpublished, p. 10) note that the white paper was never debated nationally or locally. There was ‘limited community consultation’, as the reforms were mainly a top-down affair.

2.3.1.2 Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) 1998 – 2003

The Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) 1998 – 2003 was launched at the outset of UPE (MoES 1998; Ward et al. 2006; Eilor 2004). Its priorities were synchronised with EFA’s, which included expanding access and equity, quality improvements, delivery of educational services and capacity development, among others. It adopted the Sector Wide Approach (SWAP) and decentralisation as its governance strategies (MoES 1998; 1999; Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2006; Kayabwe 2014a). It was revised in 2004 and renamed the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) and its duration adjusted to 2015. The new ESSP has given priority to ‘meet[ing] the broad requirements of the Millennium Development

Goals, Education for All and the Ministry's mission' (MoES 2004a, p. 6). It has subsequently undergone revisions in 2007 and 2010, aimed at aligning its financial projections with EFA and MDG goals and incorporating the local language and thematic curriculum policies (MoES 2010).

2.3.1.3 Teacher Development Management System (TDMS)

The Teacher Development Management System (TDMS) was launched in 1994 with the aim of transforming the training and management of teachers ahead of the launch of UPE (World Bank 2002a; USAID 2003; Ward et al. 2006). It was jointly funded by the Primary Education and Teacher Development Project (PETDP) run by the World Bank and the Support for Uganda Primary Education Reform (SUPER) project run by USAID (USAID 2000; World Bank 2002a). It commenced with four programmes which included a Grade 3 in-service certificate course, a basic management skills certificate course for head teachers, in-service refresher courses and school-based volunteer community mobilisation (Ward et al. 2006). It has subsequently developed into the official channel for providing both pre-service and in-service teacher education, professional guidance, school level support and community mobilisation. It is currently implemented through a decentralised network of 570 coordinating centres (CCs) served by Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs) from 23 Core Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs) who cover the entire country (MoES 2014a). It has been succeeded by the Primary Teacher Development and Management Plan (PTDMP) (World Bank 2002a; Ward et al. 2006; USAID 2003).

2.3.1.4 Instructional Materials Unit

The instructional materials unit (IMU) was established in the Ministry of Education to manage procurement, following the launch of the instructional materials reform programme in 2000 (Ward et al. 2006; Penny et al. 2008). This followed a study which found that there is poor textbook usage under UPE. The study revealed that textbooks are often locked in cupboards and not issued to users, especially when in short supply. Furthermore, it revealed that textbook life is low and that they are more highly priced in Uganda than in the neighbouring countries (Ward et al. 2006; Penny et al. 2008). The

reform adopted a ‘competitive’ procurement system, whilst attempting to improve distribution, storage and use within schools.

2.4 The local government context

The local government constitutes the decentralisation context of UPE. The main responsibility for coordinating its function lies with the district education department (DED) under the leadership of the district education officer (DEO). Its role includes linking the central authorities with the local authorities and schools, staff management, management of financial resources, quality monitoring and registration of pupils (MoES 1999; Kayabwe 2014a; Suzuki 2002). The highest district body, the district council, plays a role in developing policies and bylaws, while its sub-organs, the district service commission (DSC) and the district language board (DLB) are responsible for the management of teachers and the area local language respectively (Kayabwe 2014a; Suzuki 2002; USAID 2003). School management committees (SMC) are responsible for managing schools in conjunction with head teachers (Kayabwe 2014a; Suzuki (2002).

The role of Core PTCs is mainly executed through centre coordinating tutors (CCTs) (USAID 2003; Kayabwe 2014; World Bank 2012). This includes training head teachers, conducting teachers’ professional development workshops, in-service training and mobilising parents and communities. Furthermore, it includes linking national agencies like NCDC and UNEB to schools, as well as participating in joint schools’ inspections with DEDs (USAID 2003; Kayabwe 2014a). Resident district commissioners (RDCs) play a role in monitoring the implementation of policies on behalf of the president’s office (Kayabwe 2014a).

2.4.1 Decentralisation mechanisms

The local government operates through decentralisation mechanisms such as the UPE capitation grant and the school facilities grant (SFG). Below, I examine each of them in turn.

2.4.1.1 UPE capitation grant

The government pays a capitation grant to schools to cover the cost of tuition and basic operational expenses, which is channelled through the local government (Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014; Ward et al. 2006; Penny et al. 2008). It is paid at an annual rate of 10,000 shilling per pupil (approx. 2.5 U.S dollars) in quarterly instalments (MoES 2015; Nishimura 2009). The grant is targeted for expenditure on extra instructional materials, co-curricular activities and school management, in accordance with Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) guidelines (Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014; Ward et al. 2006; Penny et al. 2008). The Ministry of Education, local government and schools are required to publicise its remittances.

2.4.1.2 School facilities grant (SFG)

The school facilities grant is intended to assist school communities construct and complete unfinished classrooms, a head teacher's office, teachers' accommodation, latrines, as well as purchase furniture (Ward et al. 2006; Penny et al. 2008; Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014). It is channelled to the districts as a conditional grant to be used in accordance with Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) guidelines, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (Ward et al. 2006; Penny et al. 2008). SMCs are responsible for preparing the grant applications, contracting and supervision on behalf of the schools. The Ministry of Education is required to publicise the details of SFG transfers to the districts.

2.5 The school context

The school context is characterised the teachers' body and student body. The teachers' body is represented by their subject departments and associations, while the student body is represented by their grades, clubs and prefecture.

According to a recent government report (MoES 2015) the number of qualified teachers stands at 192,566, while the pupil-teacher ratio stands at 53:1. Moreover, a survey (NAPE

2015) found considerable gaps in teacher proficiency. Overall literacy stood at 66.4 percent, while proficiency in grammar was measured at 67.1 percent. Furthermore, teacher absenteeism is rampant, which has been measured as high as 30 percent (Okurut 2012; MoES 2014a; Ward et al. 2006; ADEA n.d). In another recent study (MoES 2014a), 47 per cent of teachers expressed poor job satisfaction, with only 16 percent aspiring to remain in the profession over the next two years. However, teacher remuneration has improved following a 25 percent pay raise granted by the government in 2014 (MoES 2014a). In addition, the government is taking measures to improve teacher welfare and working conditions through providing housing and incentives for those in hard to reach areas (MoES 2014a).

With regard to pupils, a recent report (MoES 2015) puts the enrolment at 8.26 million, while the gross enrolment ratio (GER)¹ stands at 109 percent, which indicates a high proportion of both underage and overage pupils. Another report (MoES 2014a) indicates that only 24 percent of pupils enrol at the stipulated age of 6 years (see GOU 1992; MoES 2014b; CREATE 2011; Nishimura 2009; Lewin 2009). This poses significant challenges since overage pupils tend to drop out, while underage pupils experience difficulties in coping with the curriculum (Nishimura 2009; Lewin 2009; MoES 2014a; CREATE 2011). The pupil-classroom ratio currently stands at 63:1, while the pupil-course book ratio stands at 4:1 (MoES 2015).

Several studies (Byamugisha and Ssenabulya 2005; NAPE 2012; 2015; World Bank 2013b) have noted the persistent failure of pupils to develop the required proficiency in literacy and numeracy. The latest survey (NAPE 2015) rates 60.2 percent of primary three pupils and 51.9 percent of primary six pupils as proficient in literacy at their grade level. This deficiency creates a vicious circle, whereby pupils fail to improve because they lack basic literacy in the first place. A high proportion of pupils also go hungry at school, despite the school feeding policy (see section 2.5.1.6) (Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post primary) act, 2008). 92 percent of rural UPE pupils go without breakfast and 7 in 10 spend the day without lunch, which affects their ability to learn (World Bank 2013a; see also O’Sullivan 2006; Nishimura 2009). The causes most often cited are poverty and the reluctance of some parents (Oonyu 2012; MoES 2009; Nishimura 2009).

2.5.1 UPE policies

The implementation of UPE has been accomplished through curriculum reforms recommended by the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) 1992, as well as others that followed later. These include thematic curriculum, local language teaching, automatic promotion, child rights policy, school/entry age intervention and the school feeding policy. In the following sections, I examine some of the key policies.

2.5.1.1 Thematic curriculum

The thematic curriculum originates from EFA's 'quality' discourse, particularly the goal of improving the process and conditions for learning (UNESCO 1990a). Uganda adopted it in 2007, following the unsatisfactory performance of her 2000 vocation-driven curriculum (Altinyelken 2010a; Penny 2008; O'Sullivan 2006; Muyanda-Mutebi 1996). It aims to foster the rapid development of 'literacy', 'numeracy' and 'life-skills' (NCDC 2006). It comprises of learning 'outcomes' derived from the general aims of education, which are expressed as competencies and adopts a thematic approach to instruction. Furthermore, it incorporates local language teaching, child-centred pedagogy and continuous assessment (NCDC 2006; Altinyelken unpublished).

2.5.1.2 Local language teaching

The local language teaching policy is a product of EFA's access and quality discourses (UNESCO 1990b). It was adopted in 1999 based on the recommendations of the EPRC, and the GWPE 1992 (GOU 1992; Ward et al. 2006). It prescribes that 'in rural areas the medium of instruction from P.1 to P.4 will be the relevant local languages; and from P.5 to P.8 English will be the medium of instruction' (GOU 1992, p. 19). It adopted the phrase 'relevant local languages' to avoid the difficulties and cost implications of sectarianism and the fragmentation of languages that the narrower interpretation of mother tongue implies.

2.5.1.3 Automatic promotion

The automatic promotion policy prescribes ‘no repetition’, or automatic progression by pupils from one grade to the next (Okuni 2003). It prescribes that pupils should be promoted irrespective of their performance (MoES 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2015). It was passed based on the ‘education efficiency’ paradigm advocated by the World Bank (MoES 2008a). It is supported by research from the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE), which advocates for age-in-grade access (CREATE 2011). Its goal is to promote access and completion by enabling the efficient progression of learners and to avoid clogging of the education system (MoES 2008a; CREATE 2011; UNESCO 2003/4).

2.5.1.4 Child rights policy

The child rights policy originates from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNESCO 2007), both of which have been ratified by Uganda. Furthermore, these protocols have been enshrined into all major Ugandan legislations, including the 1995 Constitution, GWPE 1992 and the Education Act 2008 (GOU 1992; Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post primary) act, 2008; Right to Education Project 2012; TI Uganda n.d).

The rights implicated with respect to education are ‘the right of access to education’, ‘the right to quality education’ and ‘the right to respect in the learning environment’ (UNESCO 2007). In regard to the latter, government passed a ban on corporal punishment in schools in 2006, noting that it violates children’s ‘right to respect in the learning environment’ and discourages school attendance.

2.5.1.5 School/entry age intervention

The school/entry age for UPE is stated by the GWPE 1992 as 6 years, which government aimed to achieve by 2000 (GOU 1992). However, this goal is yet to be realised, despite government’s interventions (MoES 2005; World Bank 2013b). However, the Consortium

for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) has conducted research and sensitisation towards promoting compliance with it in partner countries (CREATE 2011; see also Lewin 2009).

2.5.1.6 School feeding policy

UPE does not make primary education completely free. The school feeding policy places the responsibility for providing school meals on parents, while district councils and SMCs play an oversight role (Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post primary) act, 2008; GOU 2016; World Bank 2013a). The policy makes the taking of mid-day meals at school voluntary. It states that ‘the taking of mid-day meals at school and the payment for such meals shall be voluntary and no pupil who has opted not to pay for or take mid-day meals at school shall be excluded from school for non-payment for such meals’ (Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post primary) act, 2008, p. 56).

2.5.1.7 Customised performance targets (CPT)

The use of customised performance targets (CPT) for head teachers and their deputies was adopted in 2008. Its goal is to enhance accountability and quality assurance by measuring the performance and compliance of head teachers and deputy head teachers against set learning achievement targets (GOU 2010; MoES 2010).

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the features of the UPE curriculum. My discussion highlighted its global and multi-layered aspect, which is characterised by its international context, national context, local government context and school context, which overlap and are mutually influential. This stratification reflects Thijs and Van den Akker’s typology (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009), which I adopt for my discussion in subsequent chapters. This detailed explication is aimed at improving understanding of the curriculum.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with exploring the theoretical and empirical literature dealing with teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE in Uganda. The review has been approached in terms of themes in order to render a more systematic analysis. The key debates which emerge are addressed under the themes of ‘globalisation’, ‘teacher/biographical barriers to UPE reforms’, ‘contextual challenges of the reforms on teachers’, ‘teachers’ mediation of the reform challenges’ and ‘effects of the teachers’ mediation of reforms’.

In the following sections, I commence by interrogating the literature on the key concepts, which include UPE, teacher agency, curriculum and curriculum reform, followed by a comprehensive review under the above themes. This chapter interrogates the existing knowledge in the literature about teacher agency under UPE in order to expose the research gap.

3.2 Universal Primary Education

Universal Primary Education (UPE) constitutes the focus of this study. While major studies have explored its empirical aspects, it is much harder to find literature which makes a detailed interrogation of the concept itself. However, as a starting point, I commence by exploring some technical definitions offered by its founding body UNESCO, as well as the Ugandan government, before examining the available critical perspectives. UPE was originally conceived by UNESCO as “a system of universal, compulsory and free primary education for all” (UNESCO 2014, n.p). Furthermore, UNESCO explains the goal of universalisation as “the integration of primary education into the framework of global educational planning” (UNESCO 2014, n.p). UNESCO’s definition underlines its view of universalisation as synonymous with globalisation. Meanwhile, the Ugandan government (Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post primary) act, 2008, p. 9) offers a legal(istic) definition of UPE as:

the state funded universal primary education programme where tuition fees are paid by government where the principle of equitable access to conducive, quality, relevant and affordable education is emphasised for all children.

This definition highlights the role of the state in funding UPE and underscores its emphasis on universality and equity.

Conversely, within a critical perspective, several studies (Ekaju 2011; Nishimura et al. 2009; Nishimura et al. 2008; Stasavage 2005) all define UPE as a policy of fee abolition and underscore the importance of its financial dimension. Furthermore, Nishimura et al. (2009, p. 145) elaborate on UPE as the ‘provision of primary education for all children’, thus underscoring its universalisation aspect. However, these studies tend to overlook other important aspects such as equity and compulsoriness. Byamugisha and Ogawa (2010) conceive UPE from the perspective of reform. They suggest that UPE is part of the reform program by the government to increase access, equity and the quality of primary education. Their view resonates with the official government definition. On the other hand, Ssewamala et al. (2011) conceptualise UPE within the framework of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They note that Goal number 2 is to ‘achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015’ (ibid., p. 472). However, they do not elucidate what universalisation entails. Despite these differences, the common themes include universalisation/globalisation, fees abolition and equity.

3.3 Teacher agency

Teacher agency is the main concept informing this study. It is still undergoing debate, thus an exploration of its various conceptualisations may help to shed some light. It is worth noting that ‘teacher agency’, referring here to ‘agency theorised specifically in respect of the activities of teachers in schools’ (Priestley et al. 2015, p. 26) is currently informed mainly by the ecological approach to agency (Emirbayer and Mische 1998) and to a lesser extent by a more traditional sociological approach (Archer 1995) (see section 4.2.2 for a more detailed discussion).

For example, key studies from the ecological perspective (Priestley 2013; Priestley et al. 2015) conceptualise teacher agency as a ‘situated achievement’, which is ‘the outcome of the interplay of iterational, practical-evaluative and projective dimensions’ (ibid., 2013, p. 190). Priestley et al. (2015, p. 45) expand this conceptualisation further, which is worth examining in full:

the achievement of agency is always informed by past experience – and in the particular case of teacher agency this concerns both professional and personal experience. [It] is orientated towards the future in some combination of short(er) term and long(er) term objectives, values and aspirations and ... is always enacted in a concrete situation, therefore both being constrained and supported by discursive, material and relational resources available to actors.

Their conceptualisation underscores the essence of the ecological approach to teacher agency, which is its recognition of teacher agency as ‘something that is achieved’, in the context of its temporal-relational aspects.

A similar socio-cultural perspective has been offered by Lasky (2005). In this view, Lasky (2005, p. 900) defines teacher agency as ‘part of a complex dynamic [that] shapes and is shaped by the structural and cultural features of society and school cultures’. She suggests that each decision teachers make, or action they take, is simultaneously a consequence of past action and present context and a condition shaping the context for further action. Her emphasis of socio-cultural factors resonates with both the ecological and sociological approaches, while its temporal dimension resonates with the ecological approach. As Priestley et al. (2015, p. 28) acknowledge, it seems to ‘chime with the ecological approach’.

Furthermore, Vongalis-Macrow (2007) and Pyhalto et al. (2014) offer conceptualisations that complement this understanding of teacher agency. For example, Vongalis-Macrow (2007, p. 425) conceives teacher agency within a globalised sociological perspective as an ‘interplay’:

where teachers are not only engaging in the reproduction of structural change aligning globalisation-driven reforms to their work and practices, but also, in adapting and reacting to new structural conditions, they are transformed through their actions.

Thus, she espouses a morphogenetic view of agency similar to Archer (1995), which is underlined by agency's interaction with structure, through which they are either mutually transformed or reproduced.

Pyhalto et al. (2014, p. 306) draw on the relational perspective of agency following Edwards (Edwards 2007). They conceptualise teachers' professional agency as:

a capacity that ... includes using others intentionally as a resource for learning and equally, serving as a support for them. [It] is not a fixed disposition of an individual teacher, but is highly relational and thus embedded in ... professional interactions.

Thus, they tend to perceive teacher agency as an innate capacity and emphasise teachers' capacity to use relational resources.

3.4 Curriculum

Curriculum is the main aspect of UPE, which this study interrogates, thus, it is worth examining some of its key conceptualisations. It is worth starting with Jackson's (1996, p. 10) caveat regarding the variability of curriculum's definitions. He notes that 'there is no definition of curriculum that will endure for all time ... every definition serves the interest of the person or group putting it forward, and ... it is always appropriate to ask what the local consequences of adopting this or that definition might be'. I therefore begin by examining the roots of the concept. Egan (1978, p. 10) traces it to a Latin origin, where it originally meant 'a course' or 'race course'. However, he notes that it changed meaning so rapidly that by the nineteenth century in England, it simply meant 'content'. However, he notes the influence of French scholars, who introduced the dimension of methodology

into curriculum. Kelly (2004, p. 6) posits curriculum as, ‘all the learning that goes on in schools whether it is expressly planned and intended or is a by-product of our planning and/or practice’. His perspective emphasises the learning within schools, as well as the planning that curriculum involves.

Ahlstrom (2003, p. 3) offers a broad, holistic conceptualisation that is worth examining in full:

curriculum includes not only the entirety of activities, methods, materials, and physical and social environment of the whole learning centre, but also the dynamic processes that shape and change these components. Multiple bodies and forces, for example, the staff, the broader socio-political forces, a program’s funders, the students themselves, as well as community and national or international events, shape these processes.

Her view attributes a very broad scope to curriculum, which encompasses the entire learning environment alongside its influences, both local and international.

Thijs and Van den Akker (2009) offer a more concise conceptualisation. Drawing on Taba (1962), they define curriculum simply as ‘a plan for learning’ (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009, p. 9). They argue that their concise definition avoids unnecessarily narrowing the perspective and ‘permits all sorts of elaboration for specific curricula levels, contexts and representations’ (ibid.). Thus, it is inclusive and accommodates the broader planning aspects of curriculum which they explicate in their five layers typology comprising of the supra, macro, meso, micro and nano layers. I draw on their typology in developing this study’s theoretical framework, which I discuss in more detail in section 4.3.1.

3.5 Curriculum reform

In this section, I broaden the discussion to encompass the concept of curriculum reform. Pietarinen and colleagues (2016, p. 8) conceptualise curriculum reform as the ‘translation

of new ideas into new educational practices, which involves a complex and collective sense-making process from those involved'. He further notes that reforming curriculum is an important function, given a curriculum's overarching role of preserving social values and promoting change for the future of society. For their part, Ball and colleagues (2012) underscore the core role of the state in reform. They suggest that over the last two decades, the central state has appropriated reform, employing it to 'control', 'manage', 'transform' and 'modernise education' (ibid., p. 9).

Many scholars highlight the patterns and models which have characterised recent curriculum reform. For example, Sinnema and Aitken (2013), as well as Priestley (2011a) highlight the recent trend of the emergence of new national curricula. Priestley (2011a) notes that the new curricula are characterised by common features such as a structural basis in outcomes and a focus on generic skills/capacities, as well as on the learner. He further notes that there is growing evidence which indicates that focusing on outcomes encourages an instrumental approach to curriculum practice, which results mainly in 'first-order change'. He defines 'first order change' as follows, which is worth examining in full (ibid, p. 224):

modifications to epiphenomenal features of schooling, such as paperwork and procedures, with an emphasis on improving the efficiency of existing structures, mechanisms and social practices. Such changes contrast sharply with ... second-order changes to the fundamental structures, mechanisms and social practices that comprise the 'core of schooling'.

Priestley notes that the new curricula have been criticised for stripping out knowledge. Sinnema and Aitken (2013) note that the curriculum reforms have articulated five main emphases which include competencies, values, pedagogy, student agency and partnerships and four main goals namely; relevance, coherence, equity and improving teachers' practices. They note that their reduction of prescription has ironically resulted in pedagogical vagueness and an increased burden on teachers for curriculum design.

Bentley (2010, p. 34) identifies the 'standards-based' model with regard to reform in the global context. He notes that it is characterised by central agencies involved in policy

formulation, local authorities conducting planning and coordination and individual schools operating according to their own mix of leadership, community expectation and organisational capability. Furthermore, he notes that this model pursues reform by creating formal performance objectives, targeting resources, prioritising key outcomes and strengthening accountability structures, among others.

Fullan (1994) highlights the ‘top-down’ reform strategy. He notes that the top-down or ‘centralised’ approach utilises state-level capacity to provide framework, direction and resources, while positioning schools and teachers as implementers/consumers of new policies. He notes that it is undermined by the challenge of maintaining control. Uganda’s implementation of UPE reforms constitutes a good example of this approach. Pietarinen and colleagues (2016) highlight the ‘bottom-up’ approach or ‘site-based management’, which they see as reliant on the capacity of schools and teachers to learn, create and respond. They note that it is more effective, especially in creating ‘sustainable changes in classroom practices’ (ibid., p. 4). Fullan (1994) notes that the weakness of the ‘bottom up’ approach is the tendency of organisations not to initiate change in the absence of external stimuli.

Ultimately, Fullan (1994, p. 7), concludes that ‘neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies for educational reform work’. Thus, he proposes a hybrid ‘top-down – bottom-up’ approach, which he suggests may be achieved using four broad strategies. These include articulating an overarching rationale and direction at state level, investment by the state in value-added strategies to support and feed into local development, building capacity for schools, districts and regions and defining roles and establishing partnerships. He argues that combining strategies to capitalise on the centre’s strengths to provide perspective, incentives, networking and monitoring, and on local capacity to learn, create, and respond is more likely to achieve greater overall coherence.

In the following sections, I review the critical literature regarding teacher agency in the reform of UPE under the themes of ‘globalisation’, ‘teacher/biographical barriers to UPE reforms’, ‘contextual challenges of the reforms on teachers’, ‘teachers’ mediation of the reform challenges and ‘effects of the teachers’ mediation of reforms’.

3.6 Globalisation

Globalisation emerges as a pre-eminent concern in the literature on UPE. Verger and Altinyelken (2012, p. 15) offer a comprehensive definition that is worth examining in full:

a constitutive process of increasing interdependence between people, territories and organisations in the economic, political and cultural domains. The dominant processes of globalisation can be characterised as hyper-liberalism in the economic domain, governance without government in the political domain, and commodification and consumerism in the cultural one.

They highlight its main features as an indirect form of governance, a market-oriented ideology and consumerism, all of which are well-evidenced under UPE. Regarding education governance, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that although public policies were once exclusively developed within a national setting, they are now located within a global 'system', which is significantly affected by imperatives of the global economy and shifts in global political relations. Furthermore, they note that the discourses which frame education policy 'are no longer located simply in the national space but increasingly emanate from international and supranational organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the European Union (EU)' (ibid., p. 14). Similarly, Ball (2008) argues that the World Bank has increased its economic and ideological influence in setting the educational policy agenda, especially for less developed countries and that it lies at the centre of major changes in global education and serves as a major purveyor of western ideas about education. Their contentions are supported by the initiatives for the globalisation of basic education, which these organs have pursued since the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) at Jomtein in 1990 (UNESCO 1990a).

Ball (1998) elaborates on the role of globalisation in framing the generic concerns with which education is pre-occupied today, which he brands the 'colonisation of education policy by economic policy imperatives' (ibid., p. 122). He argues that this trend is characterised by actions such as tightening the connection between schooling and

national economics and attaining more direct control over curriculum content. He further argues that the effect of the global ‘new orthodoxy’ on education reform has been the establishment of ‘a discursive framework within which and limited by which solutions are thought’ (ibid., p. 124), which underscores its highly performative nature.

Conversely, several studies explicate the role of globalisation in the reform of national curricula and assessment over the last two decades, which has been termed ‘policy migration’ or ‘borrowing’ (Priestley 2013; Verger and Altinyelken 2012; Winstanley 2012). They note for example the similarities which have emerged in these curricula such as their adoption of sequential levels/outcomes or competencies (Priestley 2002; 2011a; 2013; Sinnema and Aitken 2013), their adoption of attainment targets (Priestley 2002), the centrality of the learner (Priestley 2011a; 2013; Sinnema and Aitken 2013) and a strong instrumental slant (Priestley 2002; 2013). Furthermore, they note that the reforms have been accompanied by changes in governance for example the adoption of devolution and managerialism (Priestley 2002; Ball 1998). This trend is evident in Uganda’s adoption of decentralisation in 1997 and the outcomes-based curriculum in 2007 (Altinyelken unpublished; MoES 1999; Kayabwe 2014a; Ward et al. 2006).

Klees (2001) highlights the effects of globalisation on education governance. He argues that globalisation has triggered an increased focus of education policy on partnerships and the adoption of Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPS), particularly by the World Bank. He notes that the ideological root of partnerships lies in the western shift to neo-liberal policies, which emphasises a diminished role for the public sector. Thus, ‘working with NGOs instead of governments became a part of the de-legitimisation of government’ (ibid., p. 110). Furthermore, Klees argues that ‘the real consequence of SWAPS is that forcing consensus on a sector program makes donor power stronger and more monolithic [as] aid recipients become even less able to find space to follow their own agendas ... Coordination easily becomes control’ (ibid., p. 112). This trend is well-evidenced in the SWAP based partnership comprising of the Education Sector Consultative Committee (ESCC) and the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG), which EFA established to oversee UPE in Uganda (Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2006).

Some studies have linked globalisation with the growth of performativity in education governance (Ball 1998; Priestley 2013). Ball (2003, p. 216) offers the following definition of performativity, which is worth examining at length:

a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performance (of individual subjects or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output.

Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 119), under the synonym ‘new public management’ (NPM) suggest that performativity ‘has witnessed a new way of steering policy implementation and outcomes through the establishment of objectives and the creation of indicators’. They explain that it involves decentralisation or ‘steering at a distance’ via performance measures, which include testing. Furthermore, they note that it is playing out in educational systems across the globe in ways that are mediated by local politics. Similarly, Leat (2014, p. 70) highlights the embrace of NPM by ‘all governments in the last 25 years, which has seen public services increasingly managed through the setting of numerical targets’. He notes that a discourse of targets, progress, monitoring and intervention has come to dominate agenda and policies. Furthermore, he argues that this reflects high stakes accountability, as those who do not meet targets may face sanction, which has resulted in ‘teaching to the test’ and a considerable narrowing of the curriculum. Both contentions are supported by the experiences of UPE. For example, UPE’s governance is based on conditionalities such as the World Bank’s ‘poverty reduction strategy papers’ at supra level and SWAP at the macro level. Furthermore, it relies on league tables and customised performance targets (CPTs) in the meso layer, down to ‘high stakes’ testing within schools.

With specific respect to sub-Saharan Africa, Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) argue that since 1990, the goals and purpose of education have been reshaped by globalisation, the changed focus of international aid agencies, the adaptation of sub-Saharan Africa to the new world order and the spilling over of new pedagogical ideas from the USA and Europe into sub-Saharan Africa. They further observe that the majority of sub-Saharan African countries are signatories to education conventions such as the ‘World Declaration

on Education for All' and that, 'curriculum reform is ... mandated through the social sectoral education components of enhanced structural adjustment facilities loan conditions' (ibid., p. 199). Similarly, Higgins and Rwanyange (2005, p. 9) argue that the 'World Conference on Education for All at Jomtein in 1990 served to institutionalise international influence and that the prioritisation of basic education was an agenda of the World Bank and other agencies'.

Several studies (Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008; Altinyelken 2010b; Tabulawa 2003) further attribute the proliferation of outcomes-based education, child-centred and learner-centred pedagogies in sub-Saharan Africa to the effects of globalisation as facilitated by international aid agencies. Tabulawa (2003, p. 22) argues that learner-centred pedagogy was imposed by aid agencies intending that it 'would assist with the breaking of authoritarian structures in schools ... [and] produce individuals with the right disposition towards liberal democracy'. Penny et al. (2008) and Higgins and Rwanyange (2005) attribute the development of Uganda's Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) based on the Sector Wide Approach (SWAP) and the Primary Education and Teacher Development Plan (PETDP), respectively, to globalisation.

Concomitant with globalisation, Altinyelken (2010b) and Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) identify the trend where current policy implementation tends to focus on the attainment of educational, social and economic development goals in disregard to practical constraints. Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) argue that local cultural and contextual realities and capacities, as well as implementation requirements are often overlooked because it is not the policy which is attractive, but the appeal and promise of the social goals attached. They cite the bizarre example of learner-centred pedagogy and competency-based education, which were promoted by international agencies and which some policy-makers in sub-Saharan Africa endorsed without being knowledgeable about the approaches.

Pertaining to Uganda, Higgins and Rwanyange (2005) note that the process of education reform failed to integrate all stakeholders. They point out that the central government and donor agencies were the drivers of change, thus key players such as teachers had few channels through which to meaningfully influence policy. Thus, teachers feel

marginalised from shaping of the reform process and feel that, ‘they are seen as implementers rather than co-shapers of policy’ (ibid., p. 19). As a result, many stakeholders currently perceive accountability ‘to be to external agencies; the donors who fund the system and the international community which demands evidence of progress’ (ibid, p. 20).

3.7 Teacher/biographical barriers to UPE reforms

The literature further focuses on teacher factors which are posing barriers to UPE reforms. For example, Deininger (2003) identifies the shortage of teachers, which has been a key impediment to reform. He argues that ‘the dramatic increase in primary attendance between 1992 to 1999 was not accompanied by a commensurate increase in the number of teachers, thus resulting in a large increase in the student-teacher ratios’ (ibid., p. 300). He notes that ‘every trained teacher faces about 70 pupils ... [which] suggests that [Uganda’s student-teacher ratios] are among the highest in the world’ (ibid). Relatedly, Dembele (2007) highlights the challenges which sub-Saharan African countries are facing in training and managing their teaching force. He notes issues such as recruitment policies, professional preparation and the need for in-service professional development. This is similarly highlighted by Wamala (2012) in his study of teacher competence. Wamala points out that as of 2009, only 63.9 percent of UPE teachers possessed the minimum Grade III teaching qualification, which indicates a high proportion of unqualified teachers under UPE.

Penny et al. (2008) address the challenges of teacher training. They note that although Uganda invested in the Teacher Development Management System (TDMS) and subsequently in the Primary Teacher Development and Management Plan (PTDMP), she continues to face the challenge of delivering adequate pre-service and in-service teacher training. This concurs with both Altinyelken (2010a) and Abiria et al. (2013). Altinyelken (2010a) highlights the inadequate support being provided to pre-service teachers for developing their skills of teaching reading, writing, listening comprehension and speaking in lower primary. She further notes that the curriculum for teacher education is considered ‘too theoretical, focusing on content and giving very little pedagogical orientation’ (ibid., p. 157). Similarly, Abiria et al. (2013) note the lack of background

training and ongoing professional development to help teachers address the diverse needs of local language teaching.

Ssentanda (2014) highlights the difficulty UPE teachers face due to inadequate training. He notes that they lack a clear sense of how to teach different elements of reading in English and even more so, in the mother tongue. He illustrates this using an example from a classroom observation. Citing a lesson in a rural school, delivered by a primary one teacher, he notes that ‘the teacher did not introduce the lesson, but simply titled this lesson ‘Reading’ on the chalkboard. She then wrote letters, syllables and words on the blackboard. After writing the letters, syllables and ... two syllable words ... the teacher began to read the letters and learners, without any prompting from their teacher, repeated all that the teacher read out’ (ibid., p. 12). He concludes that the teacher and the learners were just engaged in simple teacher prompts and chorus repetition by the learners.

Altinyelken (2010a) highlights the challenge posed by the pre-launch training for the thematic curriculum. She observes that her study participants criticised the training as ‘severely inadequate’ (ibid., p. 155), which they blamed on its duration being too short and the training ‘too hectic and hurried’ (ibid.). Some teachers suggested that the trainers lacked sufficient knowledge about the new curriculum. Thus, a significant proportion of the teachers do not feel well-equipped to implement the thematic curriculum and consequently developed a negative attitude towards it. Her findings are supported by Penny et al. (2008) with reference to the 2000 curriculum. Penny and colleagues note that the 2000 curriculum was introduced into schools without adequate teacher training and insufficient new learning materials, ‘and with no overall implementation plan, no budget and no department or individual with specific line management responsibility for its launch’ (ibid., p. 272), which indicates a pattern of poor curriculum introduction under UPE.

The issue of teacher capacity also emerges significantly in the literature. Several scholars, for example, Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008), Altinyelken (2010b) and Dembele (2007) identify the lack of capacity among teachers in sub-Saharan Africa, in the persistence of ‘traditional’ and ‘outmoded’ styles of teaching such as ‘chalk and talk’, ‘teacher-centred’ and ‘lecture-driven’ pedagogy, despite the introduction of new

pedagogies. Similarly, Abiria et al. (2013) attribute the difficulties which teachers in Northern Uganda face in plurilingual teaching to their lack of capacity. They observe that teachers lack the understanding of how to navigate the restricted oral use of a relevant local language to explain complex concepts, which leads them to feel pressured to make an abrupt change to English only, which undermines the implementation of the local language policy.

As regards teacher management, Altinyelken (2010a) notes that it has stretched the capacity of teachers and influenced them negatively towards UPE reforms. She highlights the tendency under UPE, where the least qualified teachers are assigned to teach in lower primary, which pits them against the technicalities of the thematic curriculum, bi-lingual teaching and the challenge of high pupil numbers. Furthermore, she notes their heightened workload, since deployment in lower primary follows the class teacher system, where each teacher is assigned a classroom and given the full responsibility of delivering all learning areas. Her argument is supported by Ssentanda (2014) who illustrates that the class teacher system complicates teachers' efforts to create a conducive learning environment. He explains that 'learners see the teacher calling /b/ [ba] in a *Luganda* lesson and after just an hour or less, in an English lesson, the same teacher tells them to call the same letter [bi]' (ibid., p. 10), which confuses the learners.

Teachers' beliefs, absenteeism and low morale have also emerged in the literature as significant obstacles to UPE reforms. Guerrero et al. (2013) note that absenteeism reduces the opportunity for pupils to learn, as well as increases inequality, since poorer pupils are more likely to be in a classroom where the teacher is absent. Altinyelken (2010a, p. 157) notes that in 2004 absenteeism under UPE averaged 27 percent, which was a 'considerably higher rate in comparison to other countries that had similar surveys in the same year'. For example, it was 15 percent for Bangladesh and 17 percent for Zambia, which highlights the magnitude of Uganda's challenge. Furthermore, Byamugisha and Ogawa (2010) point out that absenteeism is often exacerbated by the failure of teachers to teach even while present at school. Ssentanda (2014) highlights the challenge of teachers' beliefs with regard to mother-tongue teaching. He notes that 'there's a widespread view among teachers ... that teaching mother-tongue as a subject hinders the acquisition of English' (ibid., p. 17). Consequently, the time set aside for teaching

mother-tongue is often used to teach other curriculum subjects including English, which poses an impediment to the local language policy.

3.8 Contextual challenges of the reforms on teachers

The influence of contextual factors, particularly the political context on UPE reforms is addressed in a number of studies. For example, both Stasavage (2005) and Ward et al. (2003) emphasise the influence of politics in Uganda's adoption of UPE in 1997. Ward et al. (2003, p. 134) link their argument to Psacharopoulos' (1994) contention that 'educational policy is proclaimed or a school reform is enacted, not for its own sake, but in order to serve a particular purpose ... pedagogical, political, economic or any combination of other good causes'. In that respect, they note that UPE was introduced as a 'grand scheme' or 'political decree' with the goal of mobilising political support. However, they note that such '*ex cathedra* directives are rarely linked to any tangible output, nor are they embedded in strategic priorities' (ibid., p. 135). Furthermore, they note that the shortcomings of UPE's governance, institutional and procedural processes have led to a 'double whammy', whereby agreements have been made with funding agencies on unfeasible and impractical education reforms. They cite some of the ESIP targets, as well as education policy statements which have little grounding in the reality of the sector's capacity, needs or constraints. Altinyelken's (unpublished) overview of UPE clearly resonates with their contention.

Similarly, Stasavage (2005) suggests that president Museveni's announcement of UPE as part of his 1996 presidential campaign manifesto was prompted by electoral competition. He notes that in 1995, Museveni was reluctant to implement UPE and considered education 'non-productive'. Thus, Stasavage attributes the change in attitude to political competition. Furthermore, he suggests that the government's abrupt change from a policy of four children per family to universal access was based on political motives.

The constraints which arise from the policy reform context are also examined by several scholars. O'Sullivan (2006, p. 34) takes issue with the scope of Uganda's vocation-

oriented curriculum, which she describes as being ‘very broad and includ[ing] 10 subjects’. She highlights teachers’ complaints that ‘some areas of the curriculum were beyond the capacity of children and that it is difficult to adequately plan lessons as there were so many areas to cover in the curriculum’ (ibid). She concludes that ‘a curriculum seeking to vocationalise and be as child-centred as possible, is not large class friendly’ (ibid, p, 36), which highlights the challenges it created for teachers. For their part, Abiria et al. (2013) describe the UPE curriculum environment as a ‘policy constrained context’, arising from its ‘authoritarian’ language education policy. They argue that it ‘restricts teachers from employing forms of instruction that encourage knowledge transfer across languages’ (ibid., p. 569). Furthermore, they note teachers’ complaints that ‘if they were to actively pursue plurilingual pedagogical practices in the future without students’ attainment of high standards in English, they feared that the Ministry of Education and Sports would think that they were saboteurs and we shall be risking our work’ (ibid., p. 582), which highlights the challenge they are facing. Altinyelken (2010b), highlights the challenges which are ensuing from the high stakes examination system. She argues that it constrains teachers to focus primarily on teaching students to pass exams.

Ssentanda (2014) draws attention to teachers’ challenges with regard to the practice of bi-lingual teaching. For example, he notes that as teachers teach, they need children to remember that the letters in each language have different names, even though they look the same in the orthography. He cites the example of a classroom observation where ‘as a teacher was teaching English, she expected learners to respond to questions in English not *Luganda*. The teacher asked the learners to spell the words that they had been learning about that day. There were learners who pronounced the letter names in *Luganda* rather than English’ (ibid., p. 8). This illustrates the significant difficulties teachers face with bi-lingual teaching.

The challenge of large classes under UPE has also attracted much debate in the literature. Nakabugo et al. (2008) observe that large classes which hold over seventy pupils are a common feature of UPE and a major quality issue. They identify its challenges which include insufficient resources, exhaustion of teachers, time consuming, difficulty in catering for individual learners’ needs, assessment difficulties, challenges of class management, reduced learner participation and reduced learner interest among others.

Similarly, Byamugisha and Ogawa (2010) note the high pupil-teacher ratios of over 60:1 in certain parts of Uganda. They argue that ‘the high pupil-teacher ratio creates an overload on the teacher in terms of the amount of homework and marking required by the teacher ... this brings about inefficiency on the side of teachers affecting both teaching and learning’ (ibid., p. 71). Their view is supported by Altinyelken (2010a), who highlights the disruptive effect of large classes on class management, which is evidenced particularly with respect to thematic curriculum methodologies such as student participation, learning by doing and group work, which require smaller classes.

O’Sullivan (2006) tends to dispute their contentions. She adduces data suggesting that larger classes do not result in lower rates of progress in basic skills. Some of her findings even controversially suggest ‘that larger classes lead to greater gains’ (ibid., p. 27). However, it is worth noting that the studies she cites were conducted in developed countries, which delineate 25 to 30 pupils as a large class, compared to an average of 60 pupils in developing countries. She concedes that ‘the classes considered large in industrialised countries would be considered small in developing countries where classes of up to 100 can be found’ (ibid., p. 36). She proposes some strategies for redressing the challenges of teaching large classes such as providing student teachers with more effective preparation and reducing the curriculum overload.

Several studies also address the logistical and systemic challenges arising due to UPE reforms. For example, Ssewamala et al (2011), Altinyelken (2010a; 2010b) and Abiria et al. (2013) highlight the challenge of inadequate learning and teaching materials. Ssewamala et al (2011) note that it undermines education quality, while Altinyelken (2010a) notes that it limits the implementation of the curriculum. Furthermore, Altinyelken draws attention to the inadequate storage facilities for instructional materials which creates difficulties for both teachers and pupils. Altinyelken (2010a) and Abiria et al. (2013) also highlight the systemic challenge of insufficient time being assigned for teaching, which translates into increased workloads for teachers.

The hurdles involving pupils also feature prominently in the debates. For example, Altinyelken (2010a) and Norton and Tembe (2006) draw attention to the challenges which arise from pupils’ rural backgrounds, lack of participation in pre-primary

education and age. Altinyelken highlights the wide variances in ability which arise from overage and underage enrolment which affects pupils' achievement. Norton and Tembe focus on pupils' constraints regarding English language instruction. They argue that teachers face the challenge of students' poor exposure to English language usage because the majority of students come from backgrounds where they do not have opportunities to practice using English outside the classroom. This is coupled with their poor access to reading materials. Byamugisha and Ogawa (2010) and Lewin (2009) highlight the challenges which arise from pupil absenteeism, congested classes and lack of interest in studying. Lewin (2009) notes the massive class sizes which have resulted from the rapid expansion of access in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, he notes the significant school time that is lost through absenteeism, while Byamugisha and Ogawa point out the undermining effect of absenteeism on education quality. On her part, O'Sullivan (2006) focuses on the lack of school meals. She notes that it is a critical factor in the effectiveness of lessons as 'many children were hungry and found it difficult to concentrate as a result' (ibid, p. 35).

3.9 Teachers' mediation of the reform challenges

Teachers' mediation of the challenges of UPE reforms also feature prominently in the literature. Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) in their study of reform in sub-Saharan Africa affirm the contention 'that policy and curriculum implementation does not follow the predictable path of formulation-adoption-implementation-re-formulation, but is re-contextualised through multiple processes' (ibid., p. 196). Thus, they implicate the influence of teachers in the current failure to match practice with the growing homogenisation of educational discourse in sub-Saharan Africa. They argue that 'teachers need to understand the underlying idea, be motivated to change practice, adapt and apply appropriate pedagogies, and have the capacity to do it' (ibid., p. 203). Meanwhile, Altinyelken (2010b) notes that the experience of changing classroom instruction in sub-Saharan Africa has proved to be long and arduous, as teachers have tended to maintain a hybrid of traditional and reform-oriented practices. For example, while child-centred pedagogy is increasingly promoted by policy makers, there is little sign of it in the classrooms. She notes that very few teachers appear to have properly

understood it, or made a wholesome effort to adopt it, which indicates a substantial gap between policy and practice.

Several studies (Altinyelken 2010a; Nakabugo et al. 2008; O'Sullivan 2006) point out teachers' responses in mediating the challenges of UPE reforms. For example, Nakabugo et al. (2008) note the initiatives which teachers are adopting such as increasing the lesson duration for some subjects especially English, literacy and mathematics beyond the official time to allow for learner participation and group work. Furthermore, they note that some teachers are adopting the practice of administering daily homework to enable pupils to practise, as well as get help from their parents. Similarly, Altinyelken (2010a) notes that teachers are responding by skipping or shortening the time scheduled for learning areas considered less important such as news, physical education and music. O'Sullivan (2006) and Nakabugo et al. (2008) note teachers' initiatives in adopting pedagogies for teaching large classes. For example, O'Sullivan (2006) identifies approaches which they are adopting such as 'whole-class teaching', while Nakabugo et al. (2008) highlight co-teaching and the reduction of written exercises to alleviate the burden of marking.

Abiria et al. (2013) and Altinyelken (2010a) draw attention to teachers' attempts to alleviate the challenges of local language teaching. Both studies note that teachers are adopting translating, whereby they use plurilingual pupils to explain difficult concepts to their colleagues in a language they understand. Abiria et al. further note that teachers are adopting 'translanguaging', which involves switching to a local language combined with English to explain difficult concepts. On the other hand, Nakabugo et al. (2008) and Altinyelken (2010a) take note of teachers' initiatives in making their own teaching materials, as well as storing them. Both studies note that teachers make materials such as handmade drawings, charts and cut-outs due to the inadequate supplies. Altinyelken further notes that teachers often store these materials in their homes due to inadequate storage facilities.

Lewin (2009) focuses on teachers' attempts to mitigate pupils' performance in the 'high stakes' primary leaving exams (PLE) through repetition. He notes that 'pupils were being kept out of the grade 7 PLE ... if they were thought unlikely to do well, since school

examination results are published and strongly influence a school's reputation' (ibid., p. 163). This concurs with the findings of several government reports (MoES 2014a; MoES 2014b; MoES 2015).

3.10 Effects of the teachers' mediation of reforms

Finally, some studies debate the effects of the teachers' mediation of the reforms. For example, both Nakabugo et al. (2008) and Altinyelken (2010a) examine the effects of teachers' making their own teaching materials. Nakabugo et al. (2008) perceive it positively, arguing that it minimises dependency on materials provided by schools, while Altinyelken (2010a) focuses on its negative side, particularly teachers' complaints that it costs them a lot in terms of time and energy. Altinyelken further underlines the difficulty of accessing the prepared materials when they are stored in teachers' homes. Both studies emphasise the effects of teachers increasing the duration of some lessons beyond the official 30 minutes. Nakabugo and colleagues note that it adversely affects young learners, whose concentration span may not exceed 30 minutes, while Altinyelken (2010a) argues that it undermines the holistic delivery of the curriculum, as teachers teach only four or five learning areas per day, as opposed to the designated eight. Nakabugo and colleagues further question the practice of teachers administering daily homework. They argue that it denies children, especially those in lower primary time to rest and play.

Altinyelken (2010a) and Abiria et al. (2013) foreground the effects of teachers' adoption of translation and translanguaging to alleviate the challenges of local language teaching. Altinyelken notes that it increases pupils' enthusiasm and participation in lessons. Similarly, Abiria et al. point out that it makes learners 'feel free' and understand better. Thus, they applaud the 'resourcefulness, innovativeness and creativity of the teachers in a very poorly resourced context' (ibid., p. 582). They observe that 'although the participating teachers work conditions are arduous ... including having poor resources, large classes, long hours and low remuneration, the teachers are exercising agency and creating innovative possibilities for the students to become more successful learners' (ibid). Finally, Lewin (2009) draws attention to the effects of the teachers' attempts to mitigate pupil performance through repetition. He notes that it has resulted in over enrolment. This is indicated by the rise in grade six enrolment from being 30 percent

higher than grade seven in the 1990s, to 90 percent higher in 2004, which implies that much larger numbers of children are reaching grade six and not progressing to grade seven. This is corroborated by several government reports (MoES 2013; MoES 2014a; MoES 2014b; MoES 2015).

3.11 Conclusion

This review focused on the literature regarding teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE, which was examined under the following key themes:

1. Globalisation
2. Teacher/biographical barriers to UPE reforms
3. Contextual challenges of the reforms on teachers
4. Teachers' mediation of the reform challenges
5. Effects of the teachers' mediation of the reforms

I identified several studies on globalisation which served in elucidating its role in the reform of UPE. The review simultaneously exposed the gap regarding teachers' responses to it. Furthermore, I identified studies regarding the ecological challenges of UPE, which foregrounded issues such as the shortage of teachers, inadequate training, lack of instructional materials and politics, among others. However, the debates overlook some important issues such as teacher motivation. The literature regarding the teachers' mediation of UPE's challenges, as well as its effects is similarly sketchy. The review has therefore exposed significant gaps which this study aims to fill.

4 METHODOLOGY

The ecological approach to teacher agency offers considerable potential in enabling those who frame policies to more fully understand [their] implications for those who enact practice ... It allows us to rigorously consider how the ecologies of teaching affect teacher decision-making and teacher actions.

Priestley et al. (2016)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the study's methodology in detail including its theoretical framework, study design, analytical framework and ethical considerations. It expounds on the study's theoretical framework, which is developed within a critical realist perspective. Furthermore, it explores the study design which adopts retroduction (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014) in the first phase of secondary document analysis and the ecological approach to teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2015) in the field work phase. The study's sampling technique, data collection and analysis methods and ethical considerations are also examined in detail.

4.2 Theoretical framework

The growing focus on the study of teacher agency in the context of education reform (Priestley 2011b; Wallace and Priestley 2011; Vongalis-Macrow 2007; Robinson 2012; Priestley et al. 2015) highlights a diversity of theoretical approaches that are being used to interrogate the concept. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 11) emphasise the importance of theoretical framing, arguing that 'all knowledge of the world is mediated by paradigmatic suppositions'. They argue that different paradigms are incommensurable as they picture the world in incompatible ways, thus data are interpreted differently within different paradigms. They conclude that the 'judgement of the validity of scientific claims is always relative to the paradigm within which they operate ... [and] never simply a reflection of some independent domain of reality' (ibid). This underscores the importance of an appropriate theoretical framework. Similarly, Bhaskar and Danermark (2006, p. 282) argue that:

... what is wrong with non-theoretical perspectives ... The critical realist objection to them is that they are basically illusory, that the attempt to abstain from theory results merely in the generation of an implicit theory. A close analysis ... would reveal such theories

In principle, critical realist research therefore starts with clearly articulated theoretical assumptions.

4.2.1 Critical realism

The theoretical perspective within which this study of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE has been positioned is that of critical realism. Critical realism is a philosophy which holds that, ‘an (objective) world exists independently of people’s perceptions, language, or imagination ... [and] recognises that part of that world consists of subjective interpretations which influence the ways in which it is perceived and experienced’ (O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014, pp. 2-3). It emerged, among others, through the works of Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* 1975, Sayer’s, *Method in Social Science* 1992 and Archer’s, *Realist Social Theory* (1995), as an alternative to both positivism and constructionism, due to the critique of their limitations regarding the conceptualisation of ontology and epistemology (Fletcher 2016; Owens 2011).

Owens (2011, p. 3) argues that whereas positivism perceives the world as ‘a concrete, mind independent entity’, it focuses on developing knowledge about it through observation or empiricism, rather than focusing on the nature of the world itself. Positivist research therefore limits reality to the things that are observable, thus conceptualising the ontological as a domain of the empirical, whereby ‘*what is*, is limited by *what can be known*’, (ibid., 2011, p.6 *emphasis in the original*). Bhaskar (2008) critiques this problematic reduction of ontology to epistemology or limiting of reality to what can be empirically known as constituting the ‘epistemic fallacy’. He explains the epistemic fallacy as (ibid., p. 26):

the view that statements about being can be reduced to or analysed in terms of statements about knowledge; i.e. that ontological questions can always be transposed into epistemological terms. The idea that being can always be analysed in terms of our knowledge of being.

Owens concludes that resisting the epistemic fallacy means recognising that the truth about the way the world is lies outside the researcher's ability to observe the world. In other words, 'the world is not a product of the models and laws discerned by human agents, rather our concepts and theories about the world must fit the way the world is' (Owens 2011, p. 8)

O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) argue that positivism principally focuses on inducing strongly supported propositions from empirical observations, which it tests and improves in order to assert them as universal laws. However, they note that an explanation of causation in the social world 'cannot be elicited through a deductive ... approach because the social world is not closed like a laboratory but open to a complex array of influences' (ibid, p.4). As such, positivist accounts of research phenomena can only describe, but not explain empirical events, by contrast to 'rich, thick and explanatory' accounts which are necessitated by complex, 'open systems', such as critical realism perceives the world.

On the other hand, constructionism suggests that true knowledge of an external reality is impossible because there is no external reality outside of texts and discourses (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014). This implies that researchers must take research artefacts such as narratives, stories and discourses at face value and reject any claims of both the natural and social sciences to provide more accurate descriptions of reality and a better understanding of the world. In light of this, constructionist epistemology focuses primarily on exploring and reinterpreting subjective meaning systems through the identification of discourses and their construction of meaning (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014).

By contrast, critical realism challenges this supposed flawed 'monovalent' ontology shared by positivism and constructionism (Owens 2011), which assumes that 'the world is composed of a single ontological domain in which all things are observable' (ibid.,

p.3). Critical realism posits a ‘stratified’ or ‘depth ontology’ (Bhaskar 2008; O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014; Fletcher 2016), which perceives reality as consisting of three overlapping domains. The first is the ‘empirical’ or observable domain, which is transitive and mediated through human experience and interpretations. The middle domain is the ‘actual’, which is constituted by events, which occur whether or not we experience or interpret them. It is where the interaction of causal structures which cause observable events takes place. Finally, the third domain is the ‘real’, which is unobservable. It is where causal structures or causal mechanisms exist. Causal mechanisms are inherent properties of an object or structure that act as causal forces to produce events. This schema is illustrated in Bhaskar’s domains of reality in Table 1 below:

	<i>Domain of Real</i>	<i>Domain of Actual</i>	<i>Domain of Empirical</i>
<i>Mechanisms</i>	✓		
<i>Events</i>	✓	✓	
<i>Experiences</i>	✓	✓	✓

Table 1: Bhaskar’s domains of reality (Source: Bhaskar 2008, p. 47)

As illustrated in Table 1, Bhaskar contends that structures/mechanisms are real and distinct from the patterns of events that they generate. Furthermore, events are real and distinct from the experiences in which they are apprehended. Fletcher (2016) presents this conceptualisation graphically using the iceberg metaphor in Figure 1 below:

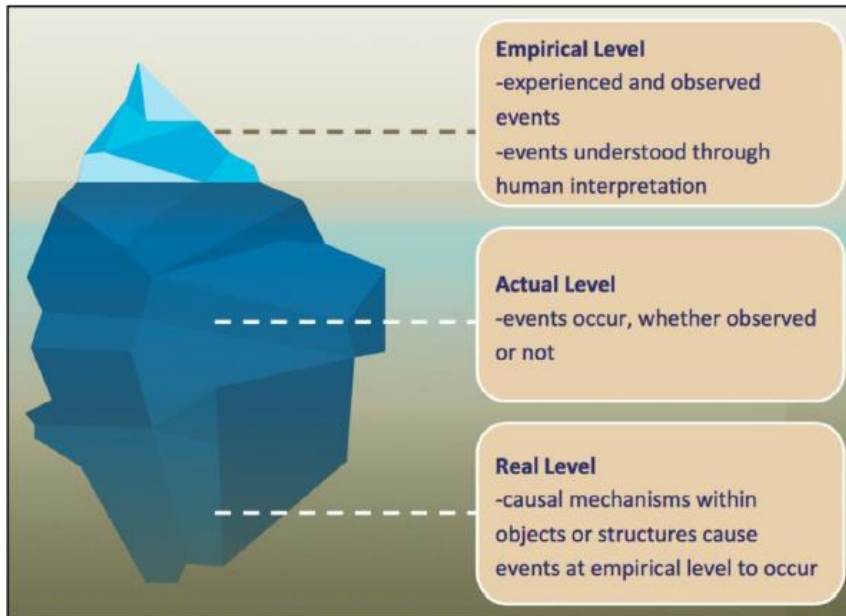


Figure 1: An iceberg metaphor for critical realism ontology (Source: Fletcher 2016, p. 3)

The iceberg metaphor illustrates that a significant portion of reality, which is constituted by the ‘actual’ and ‘real’ domains is real but not observable. Furthermore, each domain though distinct, is an interactive part of the same entity.

In view of his ‘depth’ conceptualisation of ontology, Bhaskar (2008, p. 46) argues that positivism:

by constituting an ontology based on the category of experience, as expressed in the concept of the empirical world and mediated by the ideas of the actuality of the causal laws and the ubiquity of constant conjunctions, [implies that] three domains of reality are collapsed into one.

4.2.1.1 Entities

Critical realism refers to research objects as ‘entities’, which it perceives as ‘wholes ... composed of other entities, which are their parts’ (Elder-Vass 2010, p. 66). Entities are ‘things which make a difference in their own right, rather than as mere sums of their parts’ (O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014, p. 6). They may be material for example a school’s infrastructure, or immaterial for example a school curriculum. Critical realists perceive

entities, both physical and social, as composed of different distinct layers or causal structures referred to as ‘laminated systems’ (Bhaskar 2008; O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014; Elder-Vass 2010). An entity such as a human being is composed of physical, biological, psychological and socio-cultural structures, while a curriculum’s culture may be composed of values and policy texts. The causal structures at the most basic layer provide the basis from which more complex structures at higher layers can emerge. In short, they constitute the pre-conditions for the existence of more complex causal structures.

In this regard, Owens (2011, p. 7) observes that:

all objects are composed of basic physical structures, but some more complex organic objects also contain chemical and biological structures which emerge out of these physical structures. In turn, these chemical and biological structures may give rise to the psychological structures of sentient beings, which in turn may generate socio-cultural structures through human activity.

This is encapsulated in the concept of ‘emergence’ (O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014; Owens 2011; Elder-Vass 2010).

4.2.1.2 Emergence

‘Emergence’ holds that objects or entities have ‘emergent properties which are dependent upon but are irreducible to their lower level components’ (O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014, p.7). This is because as one moves up to higher strata, each structure evolves a qualitative difference to the preceding one from which it has emerged. A higher entity is thus not always determined by its lower entities, as a result of having evolved greater causal properties. This may be illustrated for example by written school rules possessing higher coercive power than the unwritten values from which they emerge. Higher level structures cannot therefore be adequately explained in the reductive terms of the activities of their lower level structures (Owens 2011). The notion of ‘emergence’ offers an in-

depth way of conceptualising the process of change within causal structures and therefore provides an effective means of elucidating the changes under UPE.

4.2.1.3 Causal power

Critical realism further argues that entities possess causal power (Elder-Vass 2010). For example, it is the interaction of an entity's causal power with that of other objects that causes the events observed by a researcher, whether the entity itself is observable or not (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014; Owens 2011, Elder-Vass 2010). An example of causal power might be a curriculum's capacity to provide guidance to teachers. However, while causal power may be exercised, it may or may not be actualised. For example, teachers may countervail a curriculum's causal power by ignoring its guidance. Thus, critical realists perceive the social world as full of causal powers, whose actualisation is often constrained by other powers within the open social system.

4.2.1.4 Causal mechanisms

The exercise of an entity's causal power requires the existence of a 'causal mechanism' (Elder-Vass 2010). A causal mechanism relates one entity to another and has the potential to transform it in the context of no, or weak countervailing mechanisms (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014; Elder-Vass 2010). For example, in the case of a new curriculum, its causal mechanism could be an orientation seminar in which teachers are instructed on how to use it. However, critical realists emphasise that unlike in the natural world, the causal mechanisms of social structures are activity-dependent and 'exist only in virtue of the activities they govern and cannot be empirically identified independently of them' (Bhaskar 1979, p. 48 cited in Fletcher 2016). This implies that they are social products that exist within and can be understood through the human actions and ideas generated by these mechanisms.

In light of the insights provided by critical realism, Bhaskar (2008) argues that the world must be composed of concrete causal mechanisms in order for scientific inquiry to be possible and that the task of science is simply to describe these causal mechanisms. He

further argues that research both in the natural and social sciences should therefore focus on developing ‘a deeper understanding of the mechanisms’ which cause events or ‘social phenomena’ rather than concentrating on developing explanatory laws. O’Mahoney and Vincent (2014, p. 9) concur in their observation that:

it is ... the manifestation of these interacting mechanisms in actual day-to-day events, and patterns of events, that allow critical realist researchers to examine their existence without assuming that their manifestation is either predictable or determined. The task of the researcher ... is to work out a better and causally accurate, correct, or reliable explanation for these patterns of events via the development of more adequate accounts of the powers, entities and mechanisms which created them.

Critical realism thus relies on the concepts of emergence, causal power and mechanisms to provide an in-depth analysis of social reality.

At the outset of a study, critical realism advocates undertaking an in-depth ontological conceptualisation of the research object and using the insights to develop an appropriate epistemology. Owens (2011, p. 6) argues that:

It is the nature of objects that determines their cognitive possibilities for us, not our cognitive abilities which determines the nature of objects, since it is the natural constitution of objects that provides them with their particular causal properties.

In light of this, I devote the following sections to establishing the ontological make-up of my subject, ‘teacher agency in the reform of curriculum’, before discussing how critical realism has helped in its study.

4.2.2 Agency

Although it has been extensively theorised, agency is a contested concept, which thus far lacks an overarching definition (Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Priestley et al 2015). Emirbayer and Mische (1998, pp. 962 - 3) argue that ‘in the struggle to demonstrate the interpenetration of agency and structure, many theorists have failed to distinguish agency as an analytical category in its own right – with distinctive theoretical dimensions’. Relatedly, Priestley et al (2015, p. 19) argue that there is a common tendency to ‘conflate agency and action’, or conversely to view it as ‘an *innate capacity* of the human’. Such perspectives reflect the ongoing ‘structure-agency debate’ for example in the field of sociology, which has involved scholars such as Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1984) and Archer (1995) (see Priestley et al. 2015; Biesta et al. 2015).

From the sociological perspective, Case (2015, p. 843) who draws on Archer, defines agency as ‘the domain of human action and interaction’. Similarly, Wallace and Priestley (2011, p. 363) suggest that focusing on agency highlights ‘how existing individual beliefs might act back on society, via social interaction, to facilitate or impede reform’. Their perspectives focus on the domain of socio-cultural interaction, characterised by the interplay between culture, structure and agency, through which these entities either mutually transform or reproduce each other (Archer 1995). However, they stop short of analysing agency itself. Biesta et al. (2015, p. 626) argue that the main ambition of sociological perspectives is ‘the explanation of social action’, hence their failure to distinguish agency as an analytical category in its own right.

The ecological approach (Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Biesta and Tedder 2007; Priestley et al. 2015) conceptualises agency from a pragmatist perspective. It sees agency as ‘something that has to be achieved in and through engagement with particular temporal-relational contexts-for-action’ (Biesta and Tedder 2007, p. 136). Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 963) rationalise their approach based on the argument that:

each of the most significant recent attempts to theorise agency has neglected crucial aspects of the problem. [Thus] in distinguishing (and showing the

interplay) between different dimensions of agency, we seek to go beyond these various one-sided points of view.

They thus attempt to disaggregate the concept of agency and conceptualise it more holistically as:

the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations (ibid., p. 970).

Their three-dimensional perspective posits agency as underpinned by habit, imagination and judgement, the combination of which, actors exercise in temporal-relational contexts, leading either to transformation or reproduction in problematic structural environments. They suggest that the key to realising the full dynamic possibilities of agency is to view it as composed of variable and changing orientations within the flow of time, in which the ‘contexts-for-action’ are themselves temporal-relational fields, ‘towards which social actors can assume different simultaneous agentic orientations’ (ibid., pp. 963 – 4). These orientations are denoted by the past orientation or ‘habit’, future orientation or ‘imagination’ and present orientation or ‘judgement’.

Biesta and Tedder (2007, p. 136) build on the ecological perspective, arguing that agency should be perceived as:

something that has to be *achieved* in and through engagement with particular temporal-relational contexts-for-action. Agency, in other words, is not something that people *have*; it is something that people *do*. It denotes a ‘quality’ of the *engagement* of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves (emphases in the original).

Thus, they underscore the element of agency as something that has to be ‘achieved’, rather than what people ‘have’. In other words, it should not be understood as an

individual capacity, or some kind of ‘power’ that individuals possess and can utilise in any situation they encounter. Furthermore, they reiterate the importance of context and structure. Following Emirbayer and Mische (1998), they argue that (Biesta and Tedder (2007, p. 136):

contexts are primarily to be understood as *social* contexts in that agency is always a dialogical process by and through which actors immersed in temporal passage engage with others within collectively organised contexts-for-action (emphasis in the original).

The ecological approach thus ‘focuses on the ways in which agency is achieved in transaction with particular contexts-for-action, within a particular *ecology*’ (Biesta and Tedder 2007, p. 137) (emphasis added). In other words, ‘actors always act by means of an environment rather than simply in an environment’ (ibid).

4.2.3 The chordal triad of agency

Based on their three-dimensional approach, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) speak of a ‘chordal triad of agency’, where they distinguish between its iterational dimension, which corresponds to habit, the projective dimension which corresponds to imagination and the practical-evaluative dimension, which corresponds to judgement. They suggest that all three dimensions resonate within the triad as separate but not always harmonious tones, in that one or another may predominate. Thus, they argue that (ibid., p. 972):

It is possible to speak of action that is more (or less) engaged with the past, more (or less) directed towards the future, and more (or less) responsive to the present.

The iterational element focuses on past achievements, understandings and patterns of action. The projective element, in turn, encompasses the agentic aspiration aimed at achieving a difference in the future, while the practical-evaluative element represents the present, or material context for the enactment of agency (see section 4.3.3 for a related

discussion). Thus, Biesta and Tedder (2007, p. 136) observe that ‘although agency is involved with the past and the future it can only ever be ‘acted out’ in the present’.

My study is informed by these perspectives on agency. However, for its methodology, it draws specifically on the ecological approach to teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2015) (see section 4.3.3 for a detailed discussion). Priestley et al. (2015, p. 29) endorse Emirbayer and Mische’s approach which informs their own teacher agency approach, arguing that:

The ecological conception of agency-as-achievement (Biesta and Tedder, 2007), developed in more detail in the three-dimensional, temporal-relational perspective on agency offered by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), offers considerable potential to extend current thinking about teacher agency, making it possible to generate rich understandings of how agency is achieved by concrete individuals in concrete situations, and of the different factors that promote or inhibit the achievement of agency.

In the following sections, I examine the concepts of structure and culture, which constitute the ‘contexts-for-action’ within which agency is achieved.

4.2.4 Social Structure

Although social structure and cultural structure are often jointly conceptualised as structure, Archer (1996, p. xi) argues that ‘the structural and cultural domains are substantively very different, as well as being relatively autonomous from one another’. Social structure as a sociological concept has been variously defined. From a critical realist perspective, Porpora (1989, p.195) defines social structure as, ‘systems of human relations among social positions’. Lipscomb (2009, p. 63) offers a similar though broader view as ‘relations that pertain between stratified or differentiated classes, ethnic groupings, occupational roles and societal positions as well as relations between material organisations’. Both scholars thus emphasise the relational basis of social structure. However, Porpora alongside other scholars like Lopez and Scott (quoted in Elder-Vass

2010) argues that there is little consensus over what social structure means. Elder-Vass (2010, p. 77) points out that ‘the most obvious sense in which usages differ is that thinkers often seem to have sociologically different kinds of social structure in mind as they formulate their theories’.

In that respect, Elder-Vass (2008) highlights Lopez and Scott’s typology of social structure which includes institutional and relational structure. Institutional structure is comprised of ‘the cultural or normative expectations that guide agents’ relations with each other’, while ‘relational structure is composed of the social relations themselves – causal interconnections and interdependencies between agents’ (ibid., p. 281). These distinctions reflect the basic differentiation between cultural and social structure. Elder-Vass identifies a third strand of ‘embodied structure’, which refers to ‘the habits and skills that are inscribed in human bodies and minds and that allow them to produce, reproduce, and transform institutional structures and relational structures’ (Lopez and Scott, quoted in Elder-Vass 2008, p. 284). Elder-Vass (2008) attempts to unite these different strands under his emergentist framework of ‘social structure as-a-whole’.

Both Elder-Vass (2010) and Porpora (1989) attribute the manifold conceptualisations of social structure to these various distinctions. Porpora (1989, p. 196) summarises four conceptualisations of social structure which include Homan’s view of social structure as ‘patterns of aggregate behaviour that are stable over time’, Durkheim’s view as, ‘lawlike regularities that govern the behaviour of social facts’, Marx’s view, ‘as systems of human relationships among social positions’ and Giddens’ view as, ‘collective rules and resources that structure behaviour’.

For this study, I adopted Porpora’s (1989, p. 200) view of social structure as:

a nexus of connections among [human actors], causally affecting their actions and in turn causally affected by them. The causal effects of the structure on individuals are manifested in certain structured interests, resources, powers, constraints and predicaments that are built into each position by the web of relationships. These comprise the material circumstances in which people must

act and which motivate them to act in certain ways. As they do so, they alter the relationships that bind them in both intended and unintended ways.

Critical realism highlights activity-dependence as a defining property of social structure. It postulates that ‘the causal power of social forms is mediated through social agency’ (Bhaskar 1989, quoted in Archer 2010, p. 276). This avoids the reification of structure and acknowledges that it possesses an enabling and constraining effect on agency.

4.2.5 Culture

Culture is often jointly conceptualised with structure as social structure. However, Archer (1996, p. xviii) defines ‘culture as a whole’, as referring ‘to intelligibilia, that is to any item which has the dispositional capacity of being understood by someone’. She explains that culture does not just exist in the minds of people but has an objective reality independent of the knower (Archer 2000). Priestley (2011a) suggests that culture describes beliefs, values, norms and ideas among others. Similarly, Pantic (2015, p. 762), drawing on Archer, argues that ‘culture refers to the ideational contexts (e.g. ideology, societal or institutional views which can be articulated or implicit in rooted traditions and ways of being)’ and that affect how people understand their position in relation to others. In Lopez and Scott’s typology (Elder-Vass 2008, p. 283), culture is denoted by the concept of ‘institutional structure’, which they conceptualise as ‘comprising those cultural or normative patterns that define the expectations that agents hold about each other’s behaviour and that organise their enduring relations with each other’.

Archer (1996) differentiates between ‘cultural systems’ and ‘social-cultural integration’. She conceptualises cultural systems as ‘the relations between the components of culture’ (ibid, p. xviii). It comprises ‘the content of libraries’ (ibid, p. xvii) or ‘culture without a knowing subject’, which exists whether it is socially exploited or concealed, for example, pre-existing theories, ideas and beliefs (Archer 1995; Archer 1996). Archer perceives the cultural system as subject to the ‘law of contradictions’, based on the propositional register of society at a given time.

Social-cultural integration, on the other hand, refers to ‘the relationship between cultural agents’ (Archer 1996, p. xviii), or the domain of interpersonal influence i.e. ‘culture with a knowing subject’. It represents the degree of cultural uniformity produced by the imposition of ideas by one set of people on another. It may be characterised by myths, mysteries, symbols, tastes, preferences, affinities, animosities, prejudices etc. In brief, it comprises of ‘all the non-propositional things to which we assent or over which we dissent’ (Archer 1996, p. xix). In real life the two domains overlap, intertwine and are mutually influential. Archer (1996, p. xxi) proposes that in the process of interrogating cultural change one should analyse:

how contradictory or complementary relations between ‘parts’ of the Cultural System map onto orderly or conflictual relationships between ‘people’ at the Socio-Cultural level which determines whether the outcome is cultural stability or change. (*emphasis in the original*)

Archer’s stratification of culture into these two domains offers an in-depth means of explicating the processes of cultural change.

4.3 Methodology

In developing my methodology, I was guided by the principles of critical realism. This is because the research paradigm we choose leads us to commitments about what we believe exists, which affects our epistemological choices. Archer (1995, pp. 2-3) argues that:

What society is held to be also affects how it is studied. Thus one of the central theses ... is that any given social ontology has implications for the explanatory methodology which is endorsed.

Critical realist scholars (Bhaskar and Danermark 2006; Owens 2011) note that the approach adopts a ‘maximally inclusive’ epistemological outlook, which accommodates the strengths of both positivism and constructionism, while ‘avoiding their weaknesses’. This is encapsulated in its stance of ‘epistemic relativism’ (Danermark et al. 2001;

Fletcher 2016; Oliver 2011) which posits that ‘there are many ways of knowing’ (Oliver 2011, p.9). This has been translated to mean that critical realism gives a wide scope for the choice of methodologies which can be adopted for interrogating a study. The diversity of approaches which have been adopted by critical realist studies such as Fletcher’s (2016) use of retrodution, Oliver’s (2011) use of grounded theory and Case’s (2015) and Horrocks’ (2009) use of the morphogenetic approach clearly supports this view.

Critical realism further argues that although researchers may attempt to access the real social world using a variety of theories, some knowledge or interpretations can be closer to reality than others (O’Mahoney 2014; Fletcher 2016). Thus, Fletcher (2016, p. 2) urges that researchers should make a rational selection of appropriate theories that enable us to get closer to reality i.e. ‘that help us identify causal mechanisms which drive social events, activities or phenomena’.

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach which combines Thijs and Van den Akker’s layers of curriculum making (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009), retrodution (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014) and the ecological approach to teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2015). Qualitative research is considered suitable for identifying, analysing and understanding patterned behaviours and social practices (Given 2008; Merriam 2001). Erickson (2011, p. 43) explains that:

qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and to describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. It identifies meaning-relevant *kinds* of things in the world – kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs and interests – focusing on differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning (*italics in the original*).

Thus, it is compatible with my theoretical framework, which seeks to explore social practices in the ‘open system’ of Uganda’s UPE curriculum and render the findings using rich, thick descriptions (O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014).

In the next section, I discuss Thijs and Van den Akker’s layers of curriculum making, reproduction and the ecological approach to teacher agency, in turn, before discussing how they work together in my integrated analytical framework.

4.3.1 Thijs and Van den Akker’s layers of curriculum making

Thijs and Van den Akker posit a holistic five layered conception of curriculum, which breaks it down into five overlapping or contemporaneous levels or layers as illustrated in in table 2 below:

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
SUPRA	International	Common ... framework of references for languages
MACRO	System, national	Core objectives, attainment levels Examination programme
MESO	School, institute	School programme Educational programme
MICRO	Classroom, Teacher	Teaching plan, instructional materials Module, course Textbooks
NANO	Pupil, individuals	Personal plan for learning Individual course for learning

Table 2: Curriculum levels and curriculum products (Source: Thijs and Van den Akker 2009, p.9)

The highest layer is the international/intergovernmental layer denoted by the term ‘supra’. It is characterised by overarching protocols such as the ‘common ... framework of references for languages’ (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009, p.9). The ‘macro’ or

national layer follows, defined by high-level policy frameworks such as ‘core objectives’, ‘attainment levels’ and ‘examination programmes’. The third layer is referred to as the ‘meso’ layer and represents the school along with its programmes, developed through the (re)interpretation of macro layer policies by local authorities. It is followed in turn by the ‘micro’ layer, which represents teachers involved in enacting practice, as well as, classroom resources for example teaching plans and instructional materials. The final layer is referred to as the ‘nano’ and represents students and their ‘personal plans for learning’. The frameworks for the macro, meso and micro layers are developed in more detail in Priestley et al. (2015).

I adapted Thijs and Van den Akker’s typology to stratify the UPE curriculum into its five constituent layers, which enabled me to highlight its global dimensions, as well as underlying causal structures as highlighted in figure 2 below:

SUPRA LAYER
INTERNATIONAL

STRUCTURES

EFA (UNESCO, WORLD BANK, FTI/GPE)

CULTURES

UNIVERSALISING ACCESS (UPE)

FOCUS ON LEARNING

MECHANISMS

JOMTEIN, DAKAR & INCHEON FRAMEWORKS FOR ACTION

HEAVILY INDEBTED POOR COUNTRIES (HIPC) PROTOCOL

FAST TRACK INITIATIVE (FTI)

MECHANISMS



MACRO LAYER
NATIONAL

STRUCTURES

MIN OF EDUC., ESCC, EFAG, DES, NCDC, UNEB

CULTURES

THEMATIC CURRICULUM

LOCAL LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICY

MECHANISMS

EDUCATION POLICY REVIEW COMMISSION (EPRC)

GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER ON EDUCATION (GWPE)

EDUC SECTOR INVESTMENT PLAN (ESIP)

MECHANISMS



MESO LAYER
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

STRUCTURES

DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCIL, DISTRICT EDUC. DEPT, DISTRICT LANGUAGE BOARD

CULTURES

AREA LOCAL LANGUAGE

SCHOOLS INSPECTION PLAN

MECHANISMS

UPE CAPITATION GRANT

SCHOOL FACILITIES GRANT

COUNCIL ORDINANCES

IN-SERVICE TRAINING (TDMS)

MECHANISMS



MICRO/NANO LAYER
SCHOOL/CLASSROOM

STRUCTURES

TEACHERS' BODY (SUBJECT DEPTS), STUDENT BODY

PRACTICES/CULTURES

THEMATIC TEACHING

LOCAL LANGUAGE TEACHING

SITE-BASED SCHOOL RULES

MECHANISMS

SCHEMES OF WORK

LESSON PLANS

ATTENDANCE REGISTER

Figure 2: Global context of UPE

Based on the above framework, the international/intergovernmental context of UPE corresponds with ‘supra’ layer. The national context corresponds with ‘macro’, the local government context corresponds with the meso and the micro/nano contexts correspond with the school/classroom.

4.3.2 Retrodution

In interrogating the antecedent or historical context of UPE from which the ecological properties of conditioning for the present context have emerged, my methodology draws on the DREIC model developed by Bhaskar (Edwards et al. 2014, p. vii). In the model:

D stands for the *description* of some patterns of events or phenomena, R for the *retrodution* of possible explanatory mechanisms or structures, involving a disjunctive plurality of alternatives, E for the *elimination* of these competing alternatives, I for the *identification* of the causally efficacious generative mechanism or structure, and C for the iterative *correction* of earlier findings in the light of this identification (italics in the original).

Retrodution (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014; Easton 2010; Sayer 1992) which constitutes the crux of this model involves ‘identifying the causal mechanisms underlying emergent properties ... [and] explaining how these interact to produce events’ (Elder-Vass 2010, p. 72). Bhaskar (Edwards et al. 2014) explains that retrodution involves imagining a model of a mechanism which if it were real, would account for the phenomenon in question. Sayer (1992, p. 107) defines it as a ‘mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them’. Easton (2009, p.123) adds that it involves ‘moving backwards’ and applying the classic critical realism question, ‘what must be true in order to make this event possible?’ Mutch (2014, p. 225) argues that because mechanisms operate at a number of levels and crucially at a range of time scales, it implies that retrodution:

sends us back in time to look for antecedents. Just how far back is a matter of the particular phenomenon in question but ... critical realism sensitises one to go further back than a setting of the immediate context.

This study's use of retroduction thus involved conducting secondary document analysis to identify the causal mechanisms of UPE as exemplified in figure 4 (see section 4.4).

4.3.3 Teacher agency - ecological approach

I identified the ecological approach to teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2015) as the appropriate approach for realising my study's third, fourth and fifth aims, which include identifying the manifestations of teacher agency in the case studies, analysing the factors that contribute in shaping it, as well as its effects. Priestley et al. (2015, p. 29) describe their approach as 'both a *methodological* and a *theoretical* framework for empirical inquiry relating to the ways in which teachers achieve agency in their professional contexts' (emphasis in the original). In their conceptualisation, they suggest that (ibid, p. 30):

the achievement of agency is always informed by past experience – and in the particular case of teacher agency this concerns both professional and personal experience ... the achievement of agency is always orientated towards the future in some combination of short(er) term and long(er) term objectives, values and aspirations. And it ... is always enacted in a concrete situation, therefore both being constrained and supported by discursive, material and relational resources available to actors.

Thus, they posit a three-dimensional view of teacher agency, where its achievement is influenced by teachers' past experiences, short and longer-term aspirations, as well as the current material and relational circumstances. They argue that this 'analytical separation' enables the determination of when each of these domains is more 'facilitating or inhibiting' (ibid.,) towards the achievement of agency.

Their conceptualisation is represented in the key dimensions of their teacher agency approach in figure 3 below:

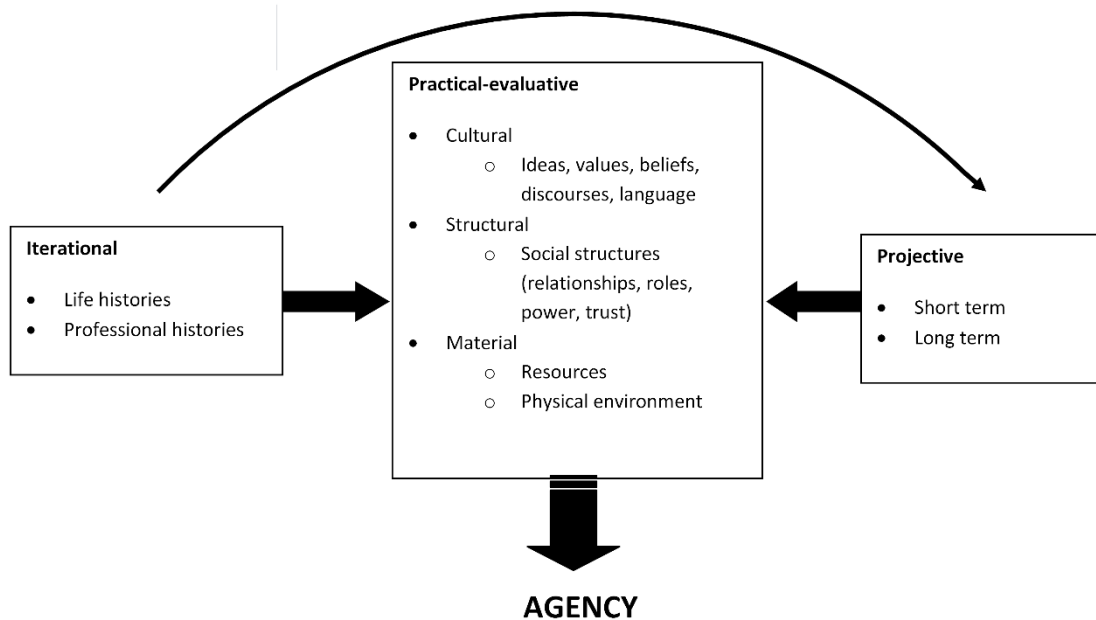


Figure 3: Teacher agency (Source Priestley et al. 2015, p. 30)

Their approach identifies three dimensions of teacher agency i.e. iterative, projective and practical-evaluative dimensions, which are normally experienced as a triad (see section 4.2.3):

- (i) The iterative dimension concerns both the teachers’ professional histories (i.e. their education as a teacher and the accumulated experience of being a teacher) and personal history (i.e. general life). It comprises of their knowledge and skills, attitudes, values and beliefs. It is often concerned with habit (and expectation maintenance), as well as the individual’s ability to choose and manoeuvre between repertoires. This professional habitus influences how teachers might actively respond to dilemmas, problems and opportunities in their practice.
- (ii) The projective dimension concerns teachers’ ability to visualise alternative futures in their professional practice, which may relate for example to the

development and welfare of students or may be more narrowly instrumental such as maintaining a 'normal desirable state in the classroom', fabrication of the school's image, or even corruption and cheating. It distinguishes between short term and long(er) term orientations of action.

- (iii) The practical-evaluative dimension relates to teachers' day-to-day navigation of the present contexts-for-action/working environment. It concerns conflicting pressures in teachers' work, relationships and material aspects. It focuses on the nature of the present-day context as mediated by social (structural and cultural) and material aspects.

I found Priestley and colleagues' model suitable for framing my study in order to analyse the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE in Uganda, due to its holistic, three-dimensional approach. In that regard, the authors (2016, p 198) argue that:

the ecological approach to teacher agency offers considerable potential in enabling those who frame policies to more fully understand [their] implications for those who enact practice ... It allows us to rigorously consider how the ecologies of teaching affect teacher decision-making and teacher actions.

4.4 Integrated analytical framework

To achieve my goal of analysing the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE, I integrated Thijs and Van den Akker's layers of curriculum making, retrodution and the ecological approach to teacher agency to form the hybrid model in figure 4 below:

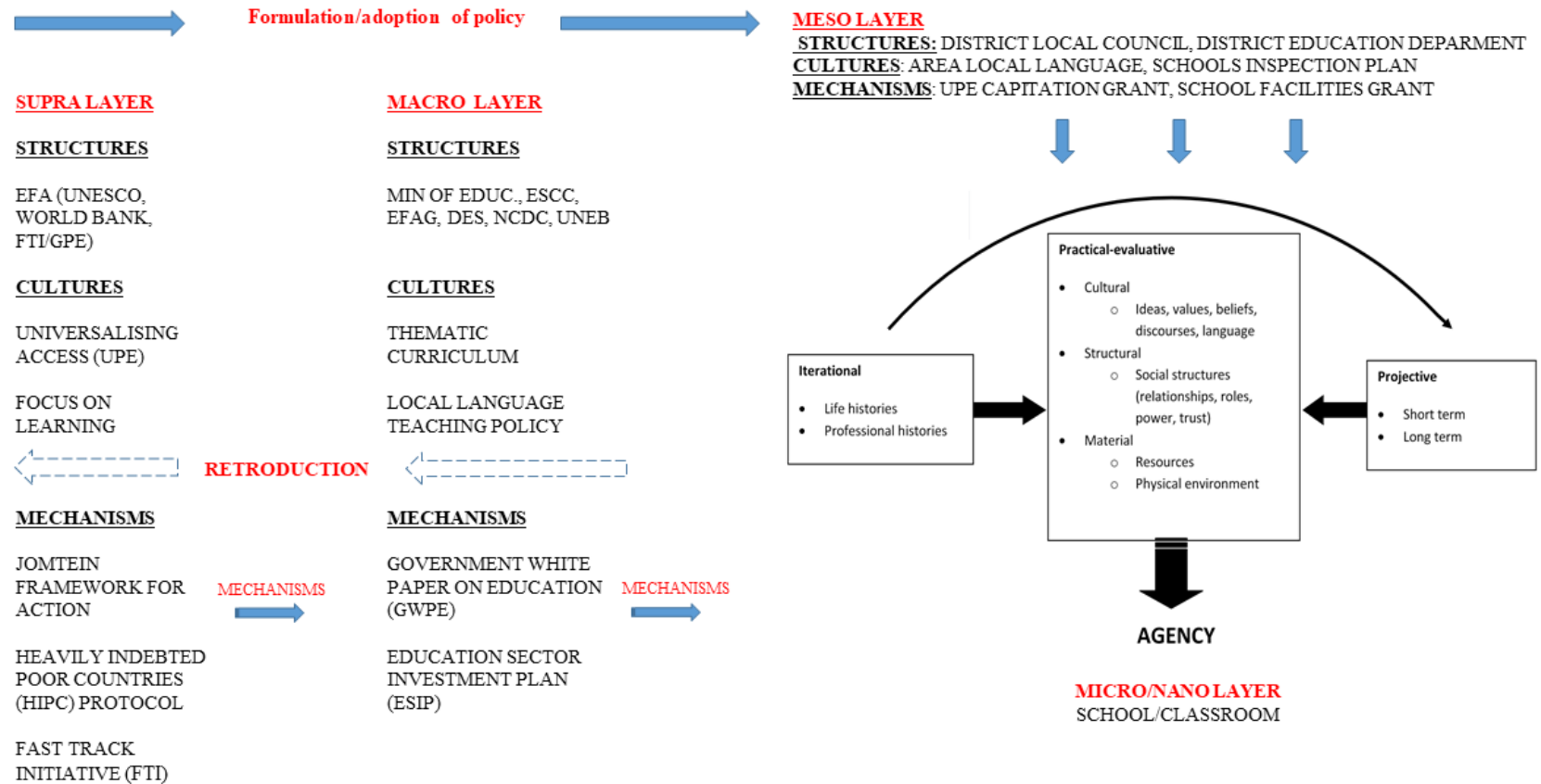


Figure 4: Integrated analytical framework

Thijs and Van den Akkers typology enabled me to stratify the UPE curriculum into its five constituent layers, in order to highlight its underlying causal structures. Although the layers do not exist in emergent relations to each other (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014; Owen 2011), in the sense that the macro layer does not emerge from the supra layer etc., the stratification enabled me to conduct a more precise inquiry into the structures, cultures and mechanisms within each layer.

The use of retroduction consisted in analysing the antecedent properties of UPE in the form of contextual factors i.e. structures and cultures and biography i.e. teachers' professional/life histories and aspirations, in order to develop a holistic understanding of UPE's properties and conditioning effects. Furthermore, the use of the ecological approach to analyse teacher agency involved positioning the model within the micro layer, as the context for the analysis. Thus, its sources of conditioning include the emergence from the other layers, as well as the participant teachers' biographies and student factors. In the ensuing socio-cultural interaction in the material environment of their schools/classrooms, the teachers achieve agency on the basis of their biographical responses to contextual factors.

4.5 Study design

The study fell into two phases. In phase one, I conducted secondary document analysis using retroduction (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014), while in phase two, I conducted field work within the framework of the ecological approach to teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2015).

4.5.1 Phase one – secondary document analysis

4.5.1.1 Secondary document collection

In phase one, I focused on collecting and analysing secondary data about UPE in order to establish its ecological emergence which has resulted from EFA reforms. The detailed

findings are discussed in chapters two and five. Overall, I collected and analysed close to two hundred documents, which broadly span over six decades of global basic education. The documents include reports, briefs, conference proceedings, surveys and legal frameworks among others, which have been issued by intergovernmental organs, the Ugandan government, research consortia and non-governmental organs. The details of the documents are too vast to describe here. However, a summary is presented in the table below:

SOURCE OF DOCUMENT	NAME/ACRONYM OF ORGAN	NO OF DOCS	
INTERGOVERNMENTAL	UN	01	
	UNESCO	60	
	WORLD BANK	23	
	UNICEF	03	
	USAID	07	
	DFID	02	
	ADEA	06	
	IOB	01	
	JICA	01	
	WFP	02	
	BRITISH COUNCIL	01	
	GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA	GOU	02
		MoES	24
MoFPED		03	
UNC for UNESCO		03	
NCDC		04	
UNEB		01	
NAPE		05	
RESEARCH CONSORTIA		SACMEQ	01
	CREATE	03	
	EDQUAL	11	
	ODI	03	
	RTI	02	
	UWEZO	05	
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANS	ACODE	01	
	ACTION AID	01	
	BUILD AFRICA	01	
	ENABLE	01	
	LABE	03	
	GCE	01	
	RTE	01	
	STC	02	
	TIU	01	
TOTAL		189	

Table 3: Secondary documents for global basic education/UPE

As highlighted in Table 3, the documents constitute public artefacts, mostly collected from the websites of UPE stakeholders. In other words, they constitute authentic public records extracted from the public domain (Bowen 2009). The documents comprehensively covered all aspects of the UPE curriculum, as stratified in Thijs and Van den Akker's typology (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009). However, they exclude primary documents which I collected during field work, and which I analysed separately under the field work phase.

4.5.1.2 Analysis using retrodution

As explained in the integrated analytical framework in section 4.4, analysis of the secondary documents was based on retrodution. Ontologically, retrodution involves moving backwards from the 'empirical domain', which in this case is represented by the field work phase of inquiry, into the 'real domain', accessed through theoretical construction and modelling of UPE's underlying causal structures and mechanisms, as elicited through the historical document analysis (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014; Easton 2009; Sayer 1992; O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014). The analysis thus consisted of identifying the antecedent/emergent causal structures of UPE in the form of social structures such as EFA's sponsor organs, its cultural structures such as policy discourses and generative mechanisms such as conference frameworks and task force protocols, as elicited by the collected documents. The analysis aimed at developing a holistic picture of UPE's antecedent causal properties in order to establish its conditioning effects on the current context, as well as its influence in shaping teacher agency. Furthermore, the analysis enabled me to identify focal areas and issues, which required further investigation during the field work phase. Thus, I used the information in developing the interview guides.

4.5.2 Phase two – field work

In phase two, my inquiry turned to field work based on a multiple case study approach (Yin 2014). Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014, p. 25) argue that the case study constitutes a basic design for realist research because it tends to be intensive and provides 'a situation in which mechanisms may be to some extent isolated and then studied'. One key goal of critical realist research is to identify causal mechanisms at work and case studies are ideally suited

for this purpose since a successful design can identify a context in which specific causal mechanisms can be identified and explored.

4.5.2.1 Sampling procedure

The selection of the cases was done purposively. Creswell (2014) observes that in purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. My sampling criterion targeted ‘critical cases’, which Flyvberg (2006, p. 229) defines as cases with ‘strategic importance in relation to the general problem’. Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014) observe that cases do not have to be narrowly drawn as in a particular work group or single organisation but can be more broadly conceived as in the case of a generic type of organisation or school. I therefore set out to identify typical UPE schools which broadly represent the UPE environment.

I therefore selected Mirembe Primary School, a low achieving school in the high performing Central district for case one and Elgonia, a high achieving school in the low performing Eastern district for case two, both of which constitute ‘critical cases’, since they are deviating from their districts’ performance trends. However, both schools also constitute typical UPE schools, since they are average performers. Thus, they are broadly representative of the UPE environment. My goal was that the two critical cases may provide rich data on the complex social interactions which account for the divergences within the cases, as well as data that is broadly representative of UPE. To facilitate the selection, I relied on primary leaving examinations (PLE) achievement data from Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), as well as National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) and UWEZO data.

To enable comparison and broaden the relevance of the findings, I aimed for similarity between the cases in terms of typical UPE factors such as government ownership, rural location, rural grade infrastructure, staffing and instructional materials status and local language teaching in lower primary. Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014) suggest that looking at related cases to compare similarities and differences allows processes, outcomes, generative mechanisms and conclusions to be drawn more effectively, as there will usually

be variations in the way a generative mechanism works itself out in given situations. They observe that (ibid., p. 31):

comparative research helps to clarify both the nature of a mechanism and the range of variations in both process and outcome that can occur. By designing research programmes featuring a range of cases showing significant variation of key outcomes, there is the possibility of developing better-founded knowledge of the nature of mechanisms and their properties.

I completed the final selection of the cases in consultation with the district education officers (DEOs) of Central district and Eastern district, where the sites are located. In addition, I targeted key informants who represented each of the layers of the UPE curriculum based on Thijs and Van den Akker's typology (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009).

4.5.2.2 Sample selection

In my final selection, I chose a primary² two teacher in each school as a key informant for the local language instruction phase, a primary four teacher each, to represent the transition to English instruction phase and a primary six teacher each, to represent the English instruction phase in upper primary. For the other curriculum layers, I selected the UNESCO regional representative to represent the supra layer and a senior Uganda Ministry of Education official to represent the macro layer. For the meso layer, I selected the district education officers (DEOs) and resident district commissioners (RDCs) for the two districts where the schools are located. Furthermore, I selected each school's head teacher, SMC parent representative and Centre Coordinating Tutor (CCT). In total I sampled 18 participants.

4.5.2.3 Data collection

I collected data in the two case study sites in two phases during field work. Phase one fell between September 2015 and November 2015, while phase two was in March 2016. I used semi-structured interviews, observation and document collection as tools (Merriam 2001).

I focused on collecting data regarding the structures and cultures of the sites' such as curriculum policies, roles, relationships and resources. Furthermore, I collected data regarding the teachers' biographies such as qualifications, skill, values and socio-economic status.

4.5.2.3.1 Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews as the main data gathering technique (Merriam 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I commenced using the interview guides which I had developed during the secondary document analysis phase and refined them iteratively with each successive interview. In total, I conducted twenty-six interviews over the two phases, in the two study sites, as well as the related curriculum channels.

In phase one which fell between September 2015 and November 2015, I interviewed the selected teachers, as well as head teachers, SMC parent representatives, DEOs and RDCs. From each teacher, I gathered biographical details such as qualifications, experience, values and socio-economic status among others, to develop an understanding of their attributes. Furthermore, from all the participants, I gathered contextual details about the curriculum, as well as their views about it.

I subsequently conducted a preliminary analysis of the phase one interview data, which enabled me to develop a better understanding of the teachers' attributes, as well as the contextual properties of the cases. I used these insights in developing more focused interview guides for phase two. I launched phase two in March 2016, in which I re-interviewed the teachers, as well as DEOs, CCTs and the senior Ministry of Education official. I was unable to interview the UNESCO official, who failed to respond to my multiple interview requests. The phase two interviews similarly focused on the structures and cultures of the curriculum, with heavy emphasis on the teachers' interactions with it. This information was elicited from all the participants, with the ministry official providing an overarching view. I was therefore able to collect richer, more focused data in phase two as a result of drawing on the insights from phase one, as well as using the improved interview guides.

4.5.2.3.2 Observation

Non-participant observation was another key technique that I used during data collection in the two phases of field work (Merriam 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I coupled the observation with note-taking during classroom observations and used retrospective note-making for the other observations around the schools. Furthermore, I utilised photography (Cohen et al. 2011) to capture important features and issues around the schools. My observations focused on collecting data about the teachers' biographies, as well as the cultures and structures of the schools. I paid particular attention to aspects which are ideally identified through observation, for example, the schools' emphases of certain values. I was able to discern this for example from the posters displayed, observing interpersonal relationships and peculiar features of the infrastructure (see Ball et al. 2012).

4.5.2.3.3 Documents

Furthermore, I collected documents (Bowen 2009) from the study sites, as well as from the other key informants, mostly using photography. These included copies of circulars, staff roles, student enrolments, attendance registers, timetables, school rules, duty rotas, inspection and achievement reports and invoices, among others. As in phase one, my goal was to utilise the documents to construct comprehensive profiles of the ecological properties of the schools and teachers.

4.6 Triangulation

Cohen et al. (2011) define triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in a study. Stake (1995) refers to it as the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning. It constitutes a means of authenticating data, as well as enhancing its richness. I employed multiple methods which included secondary document analysis in phase one, which provided rich insights into UPE's ecology. In phase two, I adopted a multiple case study approach using semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. This combination of methods and techniques enabled effective corroboration of the findings, as well as enhanced the richness of the data.

4.7 Analysis of the field work data

I commenced preliminary data analysis concurrently with the data collection covering all the data types. I followed up each school visit or interview session by reviewing the audio recordings, observation notes/photos and documents and summarising the main points (Guest et al. 2012; Merriam 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I used this technique iteratively to derive insights from the data to inform the next cycle of data collection. Furthermore, it enabled me to avoid the accumulation of un-analysed data.

On completing field work, I embarked on in-depth data analysis using Nvivo qualitative data analysis software. I embarked on coding all the data including interview transcripts, observation notes/photos and documents in Nvivo using the analytical categories highlighted by my theoretical framework (Guest et al. 2011; Priestley et al. 2015; Porpora 1989; Archer 1996). I started with the top-level codes of structure, culture and biography. I subsequently refined them using their lower level categories such as roles, policies, attitudes and responses. Ultimately, my analysis focused on identifying the sites' contextual factors i.e. structures and cultures and the teachers' biographical factors, for example their qualifications and beliefs, which are driving their responses in achieving agency.

4.8 Ethical considerations

During my field work, as well as data analysis and write-up, I drew upon the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), as well as University of Stirling, School of Education guidelines. My main priority was to avoid putting the participants at risk. Some of my data is sensitive since the inquiry targeted in-depth information about UPE's ecology, as well as teacher agency, which includes details of the participants' attitudes towards government policies, the teachers' professional backgrounds etc. Thus, I made every effort to maintain confidentiality of the data, as well as anonymity of the participants as discussed below.

4.8.1 Ethical approval

I applied for ethical approval for the study prior to embarking on field work, as guided by University of Stirling, School of Education code of research practice. This was granted by the research ethics committee.

4.8.2 Informed consent

I complied with the principle of informed consent as required by both BERA and University of Stirling, School of Education (see appendix 2). This involved explaining its terms verbally, as well as in my research information sheet to each participant and gaining their consent before proceeding with data collection. I commenced the field work by gaining the consent of the chief administrative officers (CAOs) of Central district and Eastern district, where the study sites are located, who constituted the overall ‘gatekeepers’ (Lavrakas 2008). I subsequently gained the consent of the district education officers (DEOs), followed by the head teachers of the schools, in their dual capacities as ‘gatekeepers’ and participants. I then followed this through for each individual teacher. Similarly, I gained the consent of the other participants, who included a senior Ministry of Education official, resident district commissioners (RDC), SMC parent representatives and centre coordinating tutors (CCT).

4.8.3 Confidentiality

To avoid risk to the participants, I maintained confidentiality of the data in line with the data storage guidelines. I therefore adopted a code for labelling the digital files and further restricted access to them using a password. I also stored all the hard copy data in a locked cabinet. All the data will duly be shredded and destroyed following submission and verification of my research. In my data presentation, I took all efforts to ensure non-traceability of the sites, as well as anonymity of the participants. Thus, I omitted data which could expose their identities and avoided referring to identifiers such as age, tribe, location etc. In addition, I adopted pseudonyms in order to protect the identities of both the participants and sites.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on explicating the study's methodology including its theoretical framework, study design and ethical considerations, among others. At the outset, I explored the study's ontological framework, which is underpinned by critical realism. Within this perspective, I explicated the study's subject of 'teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE' and subsequently developed its methodology, which integrates Thijs and Van den Akker's typology, retroduction and the ecological approach to teacher agency. Furthermore, I examined the study design, as well as ethical considerations.

5 THE GLOBALISATION OF UPE

There is clearly now a globally converging discourse about how education policies should reshape curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation.

Rizvi and Lingard (2010)

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I undertake a retrospective analysis of UPE reform based on secondary document analysis. I proceed within the framework of retrodution (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014), drawing on the analytical categories of structure and culture in order to elucidate the antecedent ecological properties of UPE. Furthermore, I frame the curriculum layers using Thijs and Van den Akker's typology (Thijs and Van den Akker 2009) to enable a more focused inquiry. This analysis aims to elucidate UPE's antecedent properties which are currently contributing in shaping teacher agency.

5.2 Background to the globalisation of UPE

I frame the following discussion using Thijs and Van den Akker (2009) typology, whereby the term 'supra' denotes the international context, 'macro' denotes the national context, 'meso' denotes the local government context and 'micro/nano' denotes the school/classroom (see chapter 2 and chapter 4 - section 4.3.1). The reform of UPE was achieved through the process of globalisation, as highlighted earlier. I commence by conceptualising globalisation followed by the discussion of its impact on UPE. Globalisation is defined by Verger and Altinyelken (2012, p. 15) as:

a constitutive process of increasing interdependence between people, territories and organisations in the economic, political and cultural domains. The dominant processes of globalisation can be characterised as hyper-liberalism in the economic domain, governance without government in the political domain, and commodification and consumerism in the cultural one.

Their definition highlights three main features of globalisation, namely; 1] ‘governance without government in the political domain’ 2] ‘hyper-liberalism in the economic domain’ and 3] ‘commodification and consumerism in the cultural one’. Klees (2008, p. 312) notes the ‘phenomenon of ... neoliberal globalisation’. He argues that the Washington Consensus in education has become ‘a truly hegemonic ideology’, which has advocated that (ibid, p. 335):

user fees should be used to pay for all levels of education, that primary education was a more important investment than higher education, that the privatisation of education at all levels is efficient and equitable, that foreign investment should be an important mechanism for privatisation, and that accountability could be ensured through output-based aid using standardised testing.

Drawing on the two perspectives, it is possible to elucidate the effects of globalisation on UPE from three dimensions. In terms of governance, they note that globalisation is hegemonic but indirect; characterised by ‘governance without government’. These features are well evidenced in the governance for UPE which EFA developed, which is characterised by partnership amongst the powerful international organs which constitute EFA at the supra level, as well as its partnership with the Ugandan government at macro level. Furthermore, it is characterised by decentralisation at the meso level and the use of ‘indirect steering’ (Ball 1998) through mechanisms such as UPE’s outcomes-based thematic curriculum and high stakes testing at the micro level. Finally, this entire governance is embedded in an elaborate performativity structure. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.3, which further expounds on the role of UPE’s governance in access and inputs reform.

In regard to education economics, Klees underscores globalisation as a market-driven system; underpinned by ‘privatisation’, ‘efficiency’ and the valuation of education in terms of investment. Verger and Altinyelken (2012) refer to it as ‘hyper-liberalism’. This is similarly well evidenced by and through UPE. For example, the emphasis of UPE, which constitutes basic education, at the expense of higher education was masterminded by EFA on the grounds that it delivers higher rates of return, as postulated in the World Bank’s human capital development approach (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991; Klees 2008;

MoFPED 2004). Furthermore, in line with this market-driven ideology, the Ugandan government accompanied the launch of UPE with the liberalisation and privatisation of the education sector. This has witnessed the parallel growth of private schooling provided by both local and transnational entrepreneurs such as Bridge Academies (Junemann and Ball 2015). This is discussed further in section 5.3.2.

Finally, in regard to education culture, they note that globalisation promotes ‘commodification and consumerism’, characterised, among others, by the introduction of user fees. This culture has also grown steadily in Uganda’s education sector with its elements reflected under UPE, for example, in the emphasis on parental choice and contribution (Suzuki 2002; see Klees 2008; Ball 1998). It is further reflected in the culture of Uganda’s private education sector, where education is positioned as a ‘competitive private good’ (see Ball 1998, p. 125) that is governed by consumer choice, user fees and competition, including with UPE (see Hite et al. 2010). This is further discussed in section 5.3.3.

However, an important cultural aspect that is not addressed by these scholars, which features prominently in the literature on the global south, is the role of globalisation in promoting liberal western values through education. This is pointed out in studies by Tabulawa (2003), Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008), Altinyelken (2010b) and Dembele (2007), who identify its main features as the promotion by multi-lateral agencies of active, participatory pedagogies and instructional practices such as child-centred/learner-centred pedagogy and bilingual instruction in developing countries. They argue that its underlying goal is to promote ‘liberal western sub-culture’ in support of neoliberalism. Tabulawa (2003, p. 10) argues that the interest of aid agencies in child-centred pedagogy:

is part of a wider design on the part of aid institutions to facilitate the penetration of capitalist ideology in the periphery states, this is being done under the guise of democratisation. The hidden agenda ... is to alter the modes of thought and practices of those in the periphery states so that they look at reality in the same way(s) as those in the core states. This process is being accelerated by the current wave of globalisation, which is a carrier of conservative neo-liberal ideology.

The above trend is similarly evident in Uganda's adoption of both child-centred pedagogy and bilingual instruction under UPE based on EFA's prompting. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.4. Drawing on the above framework, I now proceed with the discussion of the globalisation of UPE.

5.3 Structure

5.3.1 Governance reform

As contended in the above framework, governance reform was a key component and a prerequisite in EFA's globalisation strategy. It pursued this using partnerships, decentralisation and performativity at the different curriculum levels. At the supra level, EFA pursued a strategy based on partnership. This commenced with its own formation based on a partnership between several international organs such as the World Bank, UNESCO, USAID and the OECD (UNESCO 1990a) (see section 2.2). At the macro level, EFA pursued a partnership with the Ugandan government in establishing the governance for UPE. This was vested in the Education Sector Consultative Committee (ESCC) and the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG) (see section 2.3) (Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2006). Partnership governance is consistent with the neoliberal ideology of advancing hegemony without government. Klees (2002, p. 110) argues that the ideological root of partnerships lies in the western shift to 'neoliberal policies that emphasise a diminished role for the public sector'.

The subsequent implementation of UPE was achieved commencing with groundwork under the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) (1987), which culminated in the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) 1992. As its lead architects and overseers, the ESCC and EFAG formulated and implemented Uganda's Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) (1998 – 2003) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (2004 – 2015; 2007 – 2010 & 2010 - 2015) (MoES 1998; MoES 2004a; MoES 2008b; MoES 2010; Ward et al. 2006), which involved inputs reform, curriculum reform and decentralisation, among others. Higgins and Rwanyange (2005) argue these bodies exercise considerable influence on policy and practice through institutional mechanisms such as

monitoring annual plans, budgets and introducing new initiatives (see also Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2003).

At the meso level, decentralisation was adopted as the governance for UPE. It involved the integration of the local governments through the Local Government Act 1997 and the revised School Management Committee Regulations 2000 (see section 2.4) (MoES 1999; Kayabwe 2014a; Suzuki 2002; Ward et al. 2006). Decentralisation enabled the government to devolve some functions to the local authorities such as quality monitoring and the management of mechanisms such as the UPE capitation grant and the school facilities grant (SFG) (see section 2.4) (Ward et al. 2006; Kayabwe 2014; Grauwe and Lugaz 2011; MoES 1999; Mbabazi et al. unpublished). Like partnerships, decentralisation is a well-attested neoliberal governance strategy which involves devolving responsibility and enhancing participation (Klees 2008; Priestley 2002; Suzuki 2002). Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 121) note that the pressure to decentralise ‘is legitimated ... by international policy organisations such as OECD, UNESCO, and APEC as part of a broader agenda of multilateralism in education and the Washington consensus’.

The use of ‘indirect steering’ or performativity (Ball 1998) is the governance which was adopted for the micro layer. It is channelled through UPE’s outcomes-based thematic curriculum, as well as its high stakes primary leaving exams (PLE) (see NCDC 2006; Altinyelken unpublished). Priestley et al. (2012, p. 192) suggest that ‘outcomes-driven methods ... represents a systematic effort to extend central control over schooling’. The Ugandan government adopted the outcomes-based curriculum in 2007, despite existing criticisms of its weaknesses (see Priestley 2002). This is coupled with the practice of publishing PLE results in the public media. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that due to globalisation, comparative performance on testing regimes has become a surrogate measure for determining the quality and effectiveness of national educational systems. Uganda’s adoption of these well-attested new public management (NPM) techniques (Leat 2014; Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Ball 1998) is a reflection of her underlying goal of ‘steering at a distance’ through target setting, accountability and comparison.

The reform of UPE’s governance has fallen short due to several factors, which has affected teacher practices. For example, the partnership at macro level was based on conditionalities

such as the World Bank's 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper' (PRSP), which imposed stringent conditions regarding the use of funding (World Bank 2004; MoFPED 2000; MoFPED 2004; Eilor 2004; Foster unpublished). Furthermore, it was underpinned by FTI's 'indicative benchmarks', which prescribed strict 'undertakings' in relation to class size, domestic investment in education and pupil-teacher ratios, among others, in disregard to Uganda's social, economic and political context (Rose 2005; Bermingham 2011; Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2006; World Bank 2004; Foster unpublished). These conditionalities severely constrained local input, leading to agreements being made on some unfeasible and impractical reforms (Ward et al. 2003; Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2006). Thus, Higgins and Rwanyange (2005, p. 19) note that teachers 'feel marginalised from shaping of the reform process and feel that they are seen as implementers rather than co-shapers of policy'. This has undermined their ownership and motivation (MoES 2014a; MoES 2014b; Altinyelken unpublished). At the meso level, decentralisation was undermined by the reluctant support government gave to the local authorities, as well as corruption and delays in remitting funds (Ward et al. 2006; Eilor 2004). This has hampered the smooth running of mechanisms such as the UPE capitation grant and the school facilities grant (SFG), which is leading to the poor delivery of inputs (see section 5.3.3) (Suzuki 2002; Kayabwe 2014a; Penny et al. 2008; Ward et al. 2006; Eilor 2004). Finally, at the micro level, the excessive performativity due to output regulation and testing has created significant stress for teachers, which they are responding to in various agentic ways (Altinyelken 2010b; unpublished; Lewin 2009). For example, Lewin (2009) notes that teachers are responding by advising pupils to repeat classes where they consider them unlikely to do well. Similarly, Altinyelken (2010b) notes that teachers are adjusting their pedagogical strategies, such that approaches perceived to have little impact on student achievement in national examinations are not emphasised.

5.3.2 Access reform

Universalisation of access has been 'a major', if not 'the major' reform which EFA has pursued in its globalisation of UPE. EFA underscored its imperative based on the 'right to education' discourse (UNESCO 2007; 1990b; Birdsall and Levine 2005; UNICEF 2010), as well as its human capital development discourse (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991; Klees 2008; Birdsall and Levine 2005). The latter advocates for the universalisation of basic education based on its market-driven ideology of maximising returns, as noted earlier

(Lockheed and Verspoor 1991; UNESCO 1990b; MoFPED 2004). The GWPE 1992 stipulates the entry age for UPE as 6 years (see section 2.5.1.5) (GOU 1992). The Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) further qualified universalisation to mean ‘admission and progression at an appropriate age’ or age-in-grade access (CREATE 2011, p. 10; see also Lewin 2009). Lewin (2009) notes that the international conferences on Education for All (EFA) at Jomtein and Dakar consolidated the commitment of most countries and development agencies to achieve both MDGs and Dakar goals. Universalisation has therefore been adopted in most EFA member countries including Uganda in 1997 (MoES 1999; see Nishimura 2008).

However, at the macro level, its pursuit has experienced significant challenges. Originally, UPE was announced by President Museveni as his campaign pledge in 1996, in the process of soliciting for votes. Ward et al. (2003, p. 135) note that it was introduced as a ‘grand scheme’ or ‘political decree’ with the goal of mobilising political support. However, they argue that such ‘*ex cathedra* directives are rarely linked to any tangible output, nor are they embedded in strategic priorities’ (see also Nishimura 2009). Furthermore, under its ‘big bang’ approach (Zuze 2010; World Bank 2002), UPE was launched in 1997 with a policy of four children per household due to insufficient infrastructure, trained teachers and scholastic materials. However, the government abandoned this in 2003, when it opened access for all children (MoES 1999; Ward et al. 2006). Stasavage (2005), similarly, attributes this to political motives of the NRM government. In addition, UPE’s enrolment system is blamed for failing to support the earlier phased enrolment, as well as to ensure ‘age-in-grade access’ (Grogan 2009; Lewin 2009).

As a result of such factors, the implementation of UPE at the micro level has therefore been haphazard, which has led to an overwhelming increase in enrolment, described as a ‘bulge’ (MoES 2010); from approximately 3 million pupils in 1996 to over 7 million in 2004, to 8.3 million in 2016, which includes a significant proportion of underage and overage pupils (MoES 2004b; 2014a; 2014b; 2015; Ward et al. 2006; Nishimura 2009). This has overwhelmed the available resources such as classrooms and teachers, leading to overcrowding and a sharp decline in quality (Byamugisha and Ogawa 2010; Altinyelken 2010b; Grogan 2009). For example, the teaching force which consisted of roughly 81,500 teachers by 1996 (Ward et al. 2006) was rapidly overwhelmed, leading to extremely high

pupil-teacher ratios of over 70:1, which Deininger (2003, p. 300) describes as ‘among the highest in the world’ (see also Ward et al. 2006; Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014). However, this challenge is eliciting agentic responses from teachers in the form of approaches such as ‘whole-class’ teaching and ‘co-teaching’ (O’Sullivan 2006; Nakabugo et al. 2008).

5.3.2.1 Age-in-grade access

‘Age-in-grade-access’ has been pursued as an intervention to UPE’s access challenges, mainly through the school/entry age policy and automatic promotion (see sections 2.5.1.5 and 2.5.1.3). It is defined as ‘admission and progression at an appropriate age’ (CREATE 2011, p. 10; see also Lewin 2009). It has been necessitated by the overwhelming enrolment under UPE, among others. Following UPE’s launch in 1997, gross enrolment shot up to 137 percent and reached 145 percent by 1999 (MoES 1999), indicating a high incidence of underage and overage pupils (Lewin 2009; CREATE 2011; MoES 2014a). Thus, government launched an intervention, placing emphasis on age-in-grade access (MoES 2005). However, teachers have criticised the use of automatic promotion, which they argue simply places emphasis on sitting rather than passing exams, leaving pupils to reach PLE when they are still weak (Okuni 2003). Thus, some teachers are continuing to liaise with parents in practising repetition (MoFPED 2004).

5.3.3 Inputs reform

The reform of inputs has been a key priority in EFA’s globalisation drive, which it has pursued through various strategies (UNESCO 1990a; 1990b). At the supra level, EFA has pursued the mobilisation of resources through two key mechanisms, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) (now called Global Partnership for Education - GPE). Through HIPC, EFA granted relief for debt stressed countries in order to release their resources for investment in basic education (World Bank 2004; UNESCO 2015; Foster unpublished) (see also Penny et al. 2008; Nishimura 2006). As a beneficiary, Uganda has been able to substantially increase her funding for UPE (Eilor 2004; Ward et al. 2006). For example, government spending on education increased from

12 percent of budget in 1992, in the preparatory stages of UPE, to 27 percent in 2004, before dropping to approximately 19 percent in 2014 (MoES 2014a; Eilor 2004).

Furthermore, through FTI, EFA brought the main UN and multi-lateral agencies, twenty donor countries and forty-five developing countries, including Uganda in a partnership, to mobilise resources for basic education (World Bank 2004; Bermingham 2011; Rose 2005). FTI funding came to constitute over 50 percent of Uganda's education sector budget support (Altinyelken 2010a; Ward et al. 2006; Eilor 2004). However, as discussed earlier, it is disbursed under stringent conditionalities. Thus, Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 112) argue that such assistance has placed developing countries in a mendicant position, which has limited their capacity for autonomous policy development (see also Higgins and Rwanyange 2005; Ward et al. 2003).

EFA targeted the investment of these resources in the provision of school inputs such as instructional materials, equipment and facilities (UNESCO 1990b). In that regard, it advocated for partner countries to increase their funding, to be supplemented through HIPC and FTI. At the macro level, EFA helped develop mechanisms such as the instructional materials unit (IMU) in the Ministry of Education, while at the meso level it developed the school facilities grant (SFG) for infrastructure construction and the UPE capitation grant for basic operational expenditure (Ward et al. 2006; Oonyu 2015). However, these initiatives have faced various challenges. For example, head teachers have complained that the capitation grant is inadequate, which makes the running of schools problematic (Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014; Oonyu 2012; Nishimura 2009). Furthermore, tracking studies have revealed that only 13 percent of the grant reaches schools, while the bulk is misappropriated by politicians and administrators (Reinikka and Swensson 2004, quoted in Grogan 2006). Delays of up to 90 days are also experienced in its remittance, which causes planning difficulties for schools (Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014; Penny et al. 2008; Ward et al. 2006). The SFG is hampered by non-compliance with its procedures, as well as corruption, which causes delays and poor-quality work (Penny et al. 2008; Ward et al. 2006). The Ministry of Education has also been noted for its reluctance in decentralising funding.

The majority of UPE schools therefore remain under-resourced and are characterised by shortages of classrooms, teachers' accommodation, furniture and instructional materials (Penny et al. 2008; Ward 2003). A recent government report (MoES 2015) puts the pupil-classroom ratio at 63:1 and the pupil-course book ratio at 4:1, while another report (MoES 2009) puts the proportion of teachers with school accommodation (mostly consisting of grass-thatched huts with mud floors) at 36 percent (see also Byamugisha and Ssenabulya 2005). The inadequate facilities present significant difficulties for teachers, who are responding in agentic ways like walking or cycling the long distances to school daily (MoES 2009).

Furthermore, EFA has given priority to improving the preparation and motivation of teachers (UNESCO 1990a; 1990b). At the supra level, it launched the Advancing Basic Education and Literacy project (ABEL2), which developed global guidelines for teacher management (Craig et al. 1998). Furthermore, the World Bank developed the global System's Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) for analysing and reporting on teacher practices (World Bank 2012). At the macro level, EFA launched the Primary Education and Teacher Development Project (PETDP) (World Bank 2002a), the Support for Uganda Primary Education Reform project (SUPER) (USAID 2000) and the Teacher Development Management System (USAID 2003), with the aim of transforming the training and management of UPE teachers.

However, these initiatives have manifested in several challenges at the micro level (Altinyelken 2010a; 2010b; Abiria et al 2013; Penny et al 2008). For example, the teacher training did not sufficiently address the new pedagogical requirements for thematic, outcomes-based and local language teaching, which has left many teachers ill-equipped to implement the reforms (Altinyelken 2010a; World Bank 2013b). Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) and Altinyelken (2010b) underscore the teachers' lack of capacity in the persistence of 'traditional' and 'outmoded' styles of teaching, despite the introduction of new pedagogies. However, the teachers are currently responding, for example, by adopting 'translating' and 'translanguaging' for local language teaching (Abiria et al. 2013) and 'whole class teaching' for large classes (O'Sullivan 2006).

Another priority for EFA has been its goal of ‘Enhancing the learning environment’, with the involvement of parents. This is aimed at promoting conducive health and environmental conditions, in order to enhance pupil readiness (UNESCO 1990a; Jukes 2006). As highlighted earlier, parental contribution is a core principle of the neoliberal ethos underlying globalisation. Klees (2008, p, 313) argues that:

under such labels as community involvement and participation, tied to narrow versions of decentralisations ... local communities [are] increasingly called upon to supply funds, labour, or other in-kind contributions for the provision and maintenance of schools, teachers and other educational necessities.

At the supra level, EFA introduced interventions such as Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH) under the World Food Programme (WFP) (UNESCO 2000b; Jukes 2006; World Bank 2013a). At the micro level, a World Bank study (World Bank 2013a) found that the UPE environment is characterised by significant nutritional challenges. For example, 92 percent of rural UPE pupils go without breakfast and 7 in 10 spend the day without lunch, which limits their readiness to learn (see also O’Sullivan 2006). Thus, EFA partnered with the Ugandan government through the Food for Education (FFE) and The Right of All Children to Education (TRACE) programmes, which have helped in raising awareness (World Bank 2013a; Adelman 2008; UNICEF 2010). However, many parents are not yet compliant in fulfilling their responsibilities such as providing school meals and scholastic materials for their children (Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014, Nishimura 2009). This poses a serious challenge as teachers are forced to teach the hungry learners. Thus, they are responding for example by mobilising parents to provide school meals and other requirements for their children (World Bank 2013a).

5.4 Culture

5.4.1 Curriculum reform

Curriculum reform has been central in EFA’s globalisation effort, which has helped support its other reforms like governance and access, as well as promote its values. This is evident

in reforms like the outcomes-based thematic curriculum, automatic promotion and the school age policy, highlighted earlier. EFA pursued curriculum reform in Uganda, which has partly been achieved through ‘policy borrowing’ (see Verger and Altinyelken 2012; Winstanley 2013). At the macro level, this has involved Uganda’s adoption of the outcomes-based thematic curriculum in 2007, which includes local language teaching, child-centred pedagogy and continuous assessment (see section 2.5.1.1) (Altinyelken unpublished; NCDC 2006). This was at the expense of her 2000 vocation-oriented curriculum, which had been proposed by the EPRC (Muyanda-Mutebi 1996; Ward et al. 2006; Penny et al. 2008; GOU 1992). The new curriculum focuses on developing literacy, numeracy and life-skills, the so-called ‘globalised policy discourses’ (Rizvi and Lingard 2010), which O’Sullivan (2006, p. 33) terms a ‘cheap general academic education’.

Like its predecessor, teachers have criticised the thematic curriculum for its ‘heavy’ workload, which requires them to teach eight learning areas per day, as well as practise child-centred pedagogy and continuous assessment (Altinyelken unpublished; Akello et al. 2016). Altinyelken (2010b, p. 154) argues that the real aim of the thematic curriculum, especially its incorporation of child-centred pedagogy, has been to inculcate ‘the norms of a liberal western sub-culture and represents a process of westernisation with its political and economic connotations’ (see also Tabulawa 2003; Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008). Thus, teachers are currently responding by largely ignoring continuous assessment, which is hard to practice with their large classes (Altinyelken unpublished; Akello et al. 2016). They are also increasing the lesson duration of some key subjects to allow for learner participation, while skipping others considered less important such as news, physical education and music (Altinyelken 2010a; 2010b; Nakabugo et al. 2008).

As noted above, local language teaching was repackaged as part of the thematic curriculum, having first emerged in 1999 (see section 2.5.1.2) (GOU 1992; Ward et al. 2006). It constitutes a key reform, which has partly been inspired by EFA’s liberal value of promoting participation (see section 5.2). It originates from UNESCO’s mother tongue teaching policy, which advocates for the use of mother tongue instruction in the early years of primary education on the grounds that it is ‘more natural’, ‘accessible’ and delivers ‘quicker educational results’ (UNESCO 1951; 1953; 1961; Abadzi 2005; Ball 2010). However, Dembele (2007, p 543) suggests that the motives for introducing African

languages as media of teaching and learning were primarily socio-political and cultural and highlights promoting ‘active and participatory’ instructional practices as one of their main objectives.

Uganda adopted mother tongue teaching during the colonial era and used it until the breakdown of social services in the 1970s. However, it was restored in 1999, following the recommendation of the EPRC (GOU 1992; Ward et al. 2006). The policy has subsequently undergone ‘glocalisation’ (Priestley 2002; Vongalis-Macrow 2007) by adopting the phrase ‘relevant local language’, which was done to avoid the difficulties and cost implications of sectarianism and the fragmentation of languages that the narrower interpretation of mother tongue implies (Ward et al. 2006). However, it is faced with significant challenges at the micro level. Uganda has 63 local languages, of which 21 were in use as languages of instruction by 2006, which creates serious logistical challenges (Ward et al. 2006; see also Piper 2010; Altinyelken unpublished; Penny et al. 2008). Furthermore, most of these languages lack written orthographies and supportive literature (Ward et al. 2006). Most teachers have also not been trained to teach in these languages (Abiria et al. 2013; Akello et al. 2016; Altinyelken unpublished). However, teachers are currently responding to the challenges through using ‘translanguaging’ and ‘translating’ in their classrooms, as seen earlier.

5.4.2 ‘Rights’ reform

The ‘rights-based’ approach has been integral in EFA’s globalisation endeavour, through which it has influenced reforms like access and inputs (UNESCO 2007; Birdsall and Levine 2005). EFA advocates that the ‘right to education’ should be holistic; encompassing access, quality and the education environment (see section 2.5.1.4) (UNESCO 2007; see also UNESCO 1990a; 2000a; 2005). In pursuit of children’s ‘right to respect in the learning environment’, EFA partnered with the Ugandan government through the Child Friendly Basic Education and Learning programme (CFBEL) and The Right of All Children to Education (TRACE), which attempted to redress discrimination and harassment in schools (UNICEF 2010; UNESCO 2003/4; UNESCO 2005). This culminated in the ban on corporal punishment in 2006. However, studies show that teachers’ responses in adopting ‘positive disciplining’ (UNICEF 2010) strategies have not been fully achieved. For example, a

government report (MoES 2015) indicates that there is still widespread use of abusive punishment, which includes caning, forcing pupils to stare at the sun, carrying big stones and pinching.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on analysing the retrospective emergence of UPE reform from its sources in the supra and macro layers, coupled with its effects on the other layers. My aim was to explicate the study's first and second research question i.e.:

1. What are the emerging changes in the curriculum under UPE reform?
2. How are teachers responding to the curriculum changes?

Drawing from secondary document analysis, it is clear that the globalisation of UPE was driven by EFA under a neoliberal agenda. This involved the reform of governance, access, inputs and curriculum. Governance reform has involved the adoption of partnerships, as well as decentralisation and performativity. Access reform, in turn, has focused on universalisation, as well as in mediating its effects. Furthermore, inputs reform has involved the adoption of partnership funding, as well as its improved coordination. Finally, curriculum reform has been approached strategically, being partly focused on supporting the other reforms, as well as promoting EFA's underlying cultural values. Ultimately, the reforms have faced significant challenges at the different curriculum levels, including their mediation by teachers.

6 THE CONTEMPORARY REFORM CONTEXT OF UPE

The fields of recontextualization are ... 'fields of contest' involving various social fractions with different degrees of social power.

Ball 1998

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on analysing the contemporary ecology of UPE as elicited by the field work data. The data is drawn from interviews conducted with a senior Ministry of Education official, as well as the district education officers (DEOs), resident district commissioners (RDCs) and centre coordinating tutors (CCTs) of Central district and Eastern district, where the study sites are located. Furthermore, it includes interviews with the head teachers, SMC parent representatives and teachers from the case study schools. The analysis aims at establishing the changes which have occurred due to EFA's globalisation reforms.

6.2 Macro layer

6.2.1 The continuing 'struggle' with structure

While significant change has occurred in UPE's structures, it continues to be characterised by some erstwhile challenges. The senior Ministry of Education official revealed that EFA's role is currently being led by Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which is involved in supporting UPE alongside USAID's School Health and Reading Program (SHARP), as well as its Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA) program. These bodies are running interventions aimed at improving literacy, which has witnessed significant investments in instructional materials aimed at bringing the pupil-textbook ratio down to 3:1. Furthermore, they are reviewing the curriculum for pre-service training with the goal of equipping teachers with the skills for teaching literacy in the local languages.

For their part, the ministry and its agencies are continuing to discharge their roles through the old structures, as well as holding *Barazas* (workshops) when funding is available.

The lack of inputs such as infrastructure, instructional materials, teachers and funding for re-current expenditures continues to characterise UPE (see Nishimura 2008). The ministry official noted that ‘we are still struggling up to now with the structures’. He explained that because of Uganda’s high fertility rate, UPE enrolls almost 1 million new pupils each year, who are continuing to outstrip the growing infrastructure, thus perpetuating the challenges of large classes (see Byamugisha and Ogawa 2010; Nakabugo et al. 2008; Deininger 2003).

The lack of qualified teachers also continues to pose a challenge (see Dembele 2007; Altinyelken 2010a). For example, the official noted that due to the weakness of pre-service local language training, many teachers are forced to rely on their lay knowledge (see Ward et al. 2006; MoES 2014a; Abiria et al. 2013). However, this is currently being addressed through the intervention by GPE. However, its coverage is limited in scope. Furthermore, the official noted that areas like Karamoja lack teachers to implement local language teaching. However, this is being addressed by recruiting teachers who are fluent in *ikarimojong* from the neighbouring regions. He also noted that a new policy has been passed, which requires a head teacher to have a graduate qualification. This is intended to enhance their capacity.

The endemic shortage of instructional materials (see Altinyelken 2010a; Trudell et al. 2012) is also being addressed both by the ministry and GPE. The official noted that despite its limited budget, the ministry has supplied five out of the nine types of instructional materials, while GPE has brought the pupil-textbook ratio down to 1:1 in its areas of intervention. The ministry’s target is to achieve a ratio of 3:1 for primary four to seven with GPE’s assistance. However, the official noted the high number of new enrolments, as well as the short lifespan of the instructional materials, which is typically about three years as challenges.

The limited funding available for re-current expenditures also remains a big challenge. The official noted that this obstructs the ministry from conducting dissemination workshops, thus policies are mainly transmitted through circulars. Furthermore, the ministry provides

limited funding for in-service training and schools' inspection. It is also unable to provide transport funding for district officials to attend meetings. All of these are hampering the smooth running of UPE.

6.2.2 Culture – the dissemination gap

The policy context has also undergone some changes. For example, a new policy was passed which requires all head teachers to have a graduate qualification. It aims at enhancing the capacity of head teachers, as well as encouraging teachers to upgrade. The official further revealed that government aims to revive parents/teachers' associations (PTA) after reviewing their guidelines. He also offered clarification about the criteria which is used for selecting area local languages (see Penny et al 2008). He explained that:

we are going down to the local government, go down to the school, to find which language dominates, then we take it as the language to be used as the medium of instruction and then we work out with the local government on the production of the written orthography and we also put in place what we call a language board.

He further clarified the goal of automatic promotion as being to avoid the wastage of resources due to pupils being made to repeat continuously. He noted that repetition arises from teachers' failure to cover the required curriculum content. He explained that:

automatic promotion, everybody is talking ill against it, but in a massive education system, if you don't put such controls, there can be a lot of wastage, which wastage is due to weaknesses from the side of the teachers not covering the necessary curriculum content and therefore children miss out and they are punished for not having been given the whole content and the curriculum and they make them repeat continuously.

He explained the mechanism for communicating new policies, which is mainly done through circulars due to financial constraints. He explained that the ministry normally sends a circular to CAOs in the districts, who forward it to the DEOs. Later on, ministry officials

may reinforce these communications when they meet with district officials. However, he conceded that policies may end up being miscommunicated through this process. He cited the example of automatic promotion where someone might say:

The ministry says no repeating, there's automatic promotion period! So, they do not help us make the teachers understand and internalise why we are doing this. It is a big gap. It is a big gap.

Ultimately, he believes that teachers do not adequately understand policies because dissemination is not always done. He noted that this is because:

It only happens as and when there is some support. But by way of communicating through circulars, it depends on who will take the last message to the recipient.

This highlights the difficulty which teachers are facing in receiving and enacting new policies. The official further cited a compendium of policies, guidelines, circulars and reports which form part of the working documents of UPE.

6.3 The meso layer

6.3.1 Emerging new structures

There are several new social structures that are emerging within the meso environment, which include district language boards (DLBs), teachers' SACCOs, private schools, community schools and inspectorate teams with associate assessors. The DLB for Eastern district had been formed just five years previously, while that of Central district is several years older. Furthermore, *Luganda*, the area local language adopted by Central district has had a written orthography since the colonial era due to being the most widely spoken language in Uganda. On the other hand, Eastern district was still in the process of compiling the orthography for its area local language *Sabiny*. The lack of a written orthography puts Eastern districts' teachers at a disadvantage in implementing local language teaching.

Private primary schools constitute another key emerging social structure. Their popularity partly arises from offering instruction strictly in English (see Gove and Wetterberg 2011; Piper 2010). They are widespread in Central district and have similarly been growing in number and popularity in Eastern district. Although most are locally owned, there is an emerging trend of global edu-corporations such as Bridge Academies entering the market (see Junemann and Ball 2015). So far, government has ignored their violation of the local language teaching policy, which it strictly enforces in UPE schools. Thus, private schools are becoming the preference for those with the means. Furthermore, according to some participants, a peculiar dynamic has emerged whereby parents enrol their brighter children in private schools, while weaker ones are enrolled under UPE. The enrolment and performance of private schools is therefore rising, which is impacting UPE schools. Some UPE schools are therefore opting to covertly violate local language teaching in order to recoup their enrolment.

A less common social structure is that of community schools, which were evident in Eastern district. They are established by communities which either lack a UPE school, or where the environment has obstructive features such as hilly terrain, rivers etc., which pose a challenge to the pupils. They charge a small fee which is used to support the teachers, as well as feed the pupils. They are usually staffed by a mixture of qualified and unqualified teachers. According to the DEO, government usually takes over a community school after verifying its feasibility. However, he lamented the attitude of parents who are willing to pay tuition and provide lunch for their children in community schools but are reluctant to do the same under UPE.

Another emerging structure is inspectorate teams which are staffed by associate assessors, usually comprised of selected teachers and CCTs. They complement the district inspectorates, which are typically understaffed. The DEO for Eastern district noted that they are authorised to 'pick teachers of high proven integrity to support education issues'. Thus, they had co-opted the district chairperson of Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU), the chairperson of the head teachers' association and CCTs as associate assessors. Although, the resulting team appears rich and versatile, it may be argued that this practice diverts the few teachers from their primary role of teaching. Guerrero et al (2013) note that official assignments are a significant cause of teacher absenteeism.

In addition to the above, I established that the DEDs of Central district and Eastern district are comprised of just four and five members respectively, whose roles encompass all education activities in their districts. Furthermore, the DEOs explained that the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) provides a grant for inspection which covers only a single inspection per school, per term minus emergencies. The DEDs are also constrained by lack of transport. For example, Eastern district has one motorcycle for its entire department, while Central district has none. Thus, inspection in Eastern district is mainly done using *boda bodas* (motorcycle taxis) or on foot, while Central district inspectors use their personal vehicles, mostly to cover nearby schools. This renders the inspections quite ineffective (see GOU 2010; Altinyelken 2010a). The law enforcement organs such as the police and Internal Security Organisation (ISO) are also contributing in sensitising teachers against absconding from work and parents against diverting their children from school.

The role of education partners such as religious bodies, NGOs and private businesses also emerged in the data. I established that the Catholic Church and Church of Uganda are actively engaged in establishing and managing schools. Furthermore, NGOs for instance World Vision, Transparency International, Action Aid and EVAC are contributing in building infrastructure, as well as sensitising teachers regarding their professional ethics.

The findings regarding resources supports the macro layer data and raises additional issues. For example, the shortage of teachers and their lack of capacity was recapitulated by several participants (see Altinyelken 2010b). The DEO for Eastern district revealed that his district had a shortage of over 150 teachers. This situation is exacerbated by the heavy workload of the available ones due to the class teacher system which assigns a single teacher to cover all subject areas in a class (see Altinyelken 2010a; unpublished). Teacher absenteeism is also high, which the DEOs estimated at 15 percent for Central district and 40 percent for Eastern district (see MoES 2014a; Okurut 2012; Guerrero et al 2013).

Pertaining to teacher capacity, the head teachers of both sample schools maintained that their staff possess the necessary qualifications and skills (c.f. World Bank 2012; World Bank 2013b; Piper 2010). However, the CCTs who manage their training did not share this view. The CCT for Eastern district criticised the haphazard and under resourced training programmes which leave many teachers unskilled. He highlighted the inadequate training

materials, for instance, during the training for local language teaching (see also Gove and Wetterberg 2011):

teachers did not have material [i]n mother tongue. We were using English texts to teach them mother tongue teaching. We didn't have the content which would directly be good for them to directly interact with. So, we were handling English items, translate into mother tongue, then we teach them. So, they were not really very conversant about it. It was rather abstract.

The findings regarding instructional materials also corresponds with the macro findings. The head teacher for Elgonia Primary school affirmed that government has stepped up its supply, especially to the older schools. However, a big gap still exists according to one CCT. The situation with curriculum guides is similarly wanting. The CCTs explained that they have never been replaced since they were first supplied, beginning with primary one in 2007. One CCT explained that 'some are in tatters, they were mishandled. Others have been lost', while another noted that 'all those books are torn up. They cannot be used again and the ministry has never given us. There's no replacement'. They both noted that without curriculum guides, it is very difficult for the teachers to 'scheme' (plan) for lessons. Some participants further identified the lack of storage for teaching materials (see Altinyelken 2010a). A CCT observed that the required parameters are not there 'classrooms are not locked, the cupboards are not in the classrooms, the borrowing mechanism is not there', which is undermining the policy of 'putting books in the hands of children'.

There has also been vast improvements in infrastructure in both Central district and Eastern district, notwithstanding regional inequalities (see Ekaju 2011). According to the RDC for Eastern district:

classrooms were not there. Actually, three years ago in this bad weather children were seated under trees. It was bad and some of them are still in semi-permanent structures, very cold, seated on the floor.

However, government together with donors invested massively in infrastructure, which has brought some improvements. However, the high influx of new pupils each year complicates

the situation. The districts use their school facilities grant (SFG) to mitigate the challenge. For example, Central district puts up a classroom structure and a teachers' house every year.

The findings also revealed the constraints which the districts face regarding funding for recurrent expenditures (see MoES 2014a; Oonyu 2012; Higgins and Rwanyange 2005; Grogan 2006). The DEOs revealed that the ministry does not provide sufficient funds for workshops and meetings with head teachers, SMCs and teachers, particularly for transport expenses, thus many fail to attend. One DEO explained that while they strive for regular meetings, 'schools don't have money, districts don't have local revenue, conditional grant is conditional. So, there is that challenge'. Similarly, the grant which the DES provides for inspection only covers a single visit per school, per term, as seen earlier.

The contribution of parents which is stipulated by policy, also emerged in the data. To a greater or lesser extent, the parents in both districts contribute for school feeding, uniforms and scholastic materials for their children. For example, the DEO for Eastern district explained that 'if you go to a school a half way (sic) may be eating. Most of them don't eat. Parents don't contribute'. However, the RDC was more affirmative:

Most of the schools now they have gardens where they are cultivating maize and beans and it is for the children. Some of them ask the parents to contribute every term to feed the children. Some of them contribute in kind, some contribute in cash.

The main causes of the inconsistency are poverty and the voluntary nature of the policy (see sections 2.5.1.6 and 5.3.3) (see also Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post primary) act, 2008; Lewin 2009). According to the DEO for Eastern district, many parents rely on their children to do chores such as 'fetching firewood, looking after cattle, fishing and some of the children come and sell food during market days' (see Lewin 2009). Thus, they have trouble generating income to support their children at school. Others, who can only afford one meal a day explain that they would rather provide it at home, while another section insist that government should provide everything since UPE is a free system.

6.3.2 'First order' changes in culture

With regard to culture, particularly policies, the local governments of both districts are playing their role of coordination and monitoring, which involves linking the central government with the local authorities and schools (see chapter 2). The policies include thematic teaching, local language teaching, automatic promotion, the child rights policy and the school age policy. They are also involved in overseeing the development of site-based policies such as school feeding. The DEOs explained that the Ministry of Education normally issues new policies in the form of circulars to the Chief Administrative officers (CAOs) of the districts, who in turn forward them to the DEDs. The DEDs then discharge their role of communicating and monitoring the policies. The DEO for Eastern district explained that when they receive a policy:

We normally put it official, at times when the issue is urgent, we just go on radio and make communication, or we use telephone. We have telephone contacts for all the head teachers. That is how the information reaches them.

However, when time is available they communicate in writing. Furthermore, they reinforce their communications during Peer Group Meetings (PGM) with the head teachers. However, the head teacher for Mirembe noted that 'at times now they just give them to us to read through, then we take back to the person who has given you. We usually don't document them'. The head teachers bear the final responsibility of communicating the policies to teachers. However, according to one CCT, 'there is no deliberate approach to ensure that policy guidelines are in schools' to help in reminding teachers. This gap was evidenced in both Mirembe and Elgonia primary school.

The only exception to this procedure involved the launch of thematic teaching and local language teaching, which were disseminated through workshops (see Altinyelken 2010a). Following their launch in 2006, all the CCTs received training from the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), after which they conducted workshops for their outreach schools. The teachers of primary one to four received one-week's training each, beginning with primary one in 2007. This was accompanied with the provision of the curriculum guides for each grade. However, the CCTs criticised the training for being

selective, piece-meal and lacking materials and the school environments for being unsupportive, which has posed obstacles for the policies' uptake. The CCT for Eastern district explained that:

in a staff of twenty, you train three people to go and implement change. The other seventeen will say, 'but you people, what are you coming to do'. So, the environment in the school will not promote it. If we had a very smart whole school approach, where you train all the twenty teachers on one thing, then you would change the whole thing ... So you take the head teacher who can be very busy, the deputy head teacher, the implementer is not trained ... So, we have that problem.

They further noted that greater emphasis was placed on training primary one teachers and teachers as a whole, while less emphasis was placed on head teachers and their deputies, who are the first line supervisors. Altinyelken (2010a, p. 155) observes that participants criticised the training as 'severely inadequate', which they attributed to its duration being too short and the training 'too hectic and hurried' (ibid), while some suggested that the trainers lacked sufficient knowledge about the new curriculum.

Follow up policy training is also ongoing in both districts. The CCT for Central district explained that Primary Teachers Colleges (PTCs) have tried to incorporate policy training into their curriculum 'because you know, it is a challenge for a teacher to come out and find that the situation is totally different from the training he has received'. Therefore the PTCs assign the tutor in charge of professional education studies the responsibility of reminding teachers about policies. Furthermore, CCTs provide in-service support through schools' outreach, as highlighted in chapter two (see section 2.3.1.3) (USAID 2003; World Bank 2012; see also Altinyelken 2010a; Penny et al 2008). However, the CCT for Eastern district explained that there is no deliberate focus on policies in their in-service training:

they arise as you train them through the different aspects in regard to the teaching and learning processes. So, there are many policies but there's no deliberate approach to handle them.

The effectiveness of the training is also constrained by the high number of schools covered by each CCT, which limits their visits. For example, the CCT for Central district covers over 60 schools, while the one for Eastern district covers over 90 (see USAID 2003). Thus, Altinyelken (2010a) and Penny et al (2008) argue that Uganda continues to face the challenge of delivering adequate pre-service and in-service teacher training.

The participants also provided insights into their ongoing sense-making and adoption of policies (see Wallace and Priestley 2011; Pietarinen et al. 2016). Pietarinen et al. (2016, p. 5) conceptualise sense-making as a ‘complex’, ‘dynamic’, ‘interactive’ ‘construct[ion of] meaning’. For example, the CCT for Eastern district explained that thematic teaching aims at ‘developing ... the expected competencies required of ... a learner in the school setting’, by handling content in terms of themes. However, he noted that its shift from setting ‘objectives’ to the achievement of ‘competencies’ is resented by teachers. He explained that:

the shift from objectives to competencies according to the teacher, he feels when you emphasise on the competencies, it is too much work for him. Because competencies now, you have to observe real changes in the learner; you are talking about hygiene and sanitation, visiting a toilet, wash your hands after visiting the toilet. Now, you are supposed to see the learner going to the toilet, washing the hands. While the objectives will just say, 'by the end of the lesson the learner should ensure this, this and this'. So, this one, the teacher feels he has a lot of work to do, especially when it comes to continuous assessment.

It is therefore clear that while the CCT appreciates the objectives of the change, he equally empathises with the teachers, which might partly explain why continuous assessment is still being violated by teachers, despite the awareness of their supervisors (see chapter five) (see Altinyelken unpublished).

Pertaining to local language teaching, the DEO for Eastern district explained that they selected *Sabiny* as their language of instruction because it is the most widely spoken. Furthermore, the CCTs explained that the policy aims at creating a ‘friendly’ and

‘conducive learning environment’, especially one that does not overwhelm the new learner. The CCT for Eastern district explained that:

the language aspect, we looked at it and said, 'No. We cannot allow these children mix up things too early. At home you call this one *'ekikombet'* then at school it is a 'cup'. Or this one we call it *'kalamut'* at home, then at school it is a 'pen'. So, the distance between home and school is very sharp and therefore you can muddle up the whole thing. So, we said, 'no. The language aspect is important because these children are still young. Let them develop one language and learn it thoroughly well. Then at a later age, after primary three, we can tell them to do it in English'.

Despite the policy's origin in UNESCO's discourses (see UNESCO 1951; 1953; 1961; Abadzi 2005; Ball 2010) (see chapter five), it is therefore clear that it resonates strongly with the CCT. However, several participants noted the resistance of teachers to the policy. The CCTs explained that teachers oppose local language teaching mainly because they lack competence in it (see Abiria et al. 2013; Ssentanda 2014). The CCT for Central district explained that:

for those who were not well-grounded in the mother-tongue itself, they also find themselves in a dilemma. Because, here you are, you are using a language to instruct, but you are not using proper language. It is not correct language. There are mistakes to it, spelling mistakes, pronunciation and so on. So, those who are of that challenge they are not more receptive. But those who were well-grounded, especially those who completed secondary school and they had training in the local language, they are comfortably handling it.

While this may explain the resistance of teachers in the remote areas where the policy is practised, it does not fully explain the motive of peri-urban schools, which have abandoned the policy.

The policy is also being questioned by parents, many of whom lack a proper understanding of its goal. The CCT for Eastern district explained that parents feel 'cheated' and consider

it a 'setback', since the local language is not examinable. This view was confirmed by the SMC chairperson/parent representative for Elgonia:

this thematic curriculum also brought us some headache, because when you can find a teacher teaching in that mother tongue language, you ask yourself, 'are all these going to be set in an exam'. Then that thing we brought that one in our discussion, then we said, 'let them to ask the government ... to do up to a certain level, then we leave it there'.

The policy is therefore unpopular and is not being sincerely practised by teachers. In Central district, it is practised in the remote rural areas, while most peri-urban schools practice code-switching. The CCT for Central district explained that:

Unless you go to a school which is totally in a local area, far deep in the villages. You will find some of the schools actually using purely *Luganda*. Even when you look at the instructional materials displayed in classrooms, you will see they are in the local language. But those that are close to peri-urban areas and urban areas, because they are competing, they feel they are out-competed by private schools. So, they keep code-switching, they keep using English.

This dilemma therefore arises primarily due to the competition between peri-urban UPE schools and private schools. Private schools are capitalising on their exclusive English instruction to improve their enrolment and performance at the expense of UPE schools. This is creating competition, as well as leading to their resistance to local language teaching.

The participants also highlighted issues regarding automatic promotion. The DEO for Eastern district noted that it assumes a 'school which has been provided with all the adequate facilities'. In other words:

a school with a good pupil-teacher ratio, a school with good desk-pupil ratio, a school with good pupil-textbook ratio, a school with good pupil-classroom ratio, a school with good pupil-latrine stance ratio'.

According to him, this ensures that teacher-pupil contact hours are high. The CCT for Eastern district added that:

when all factors are kept constant; the learner reports to the school first day, no getting out of school during the day, no being absent, in the exposure of the teacher for all the time in the school, doing all the assignments and all the remedial work. Why should the learner fail? So, the assumption is, you have a working teacher who is concerned about his children, there's continuous assessment, which is handled throughout the day.

However, according to the DEO, this contrasts sharply with the current reality. For example, Elgonia Primary School had had over 160 pupils in primary six the previous year, such that, 'the congestion there is too much. Even the teacher to enter and mark is a very big problem'. This is coupled with high teacher and pupil absenteeism and late-coming.

Some participants criticised the policy. The head teacher of Mirembe Primary School explained that they adhere simply because that is the policy, otherwise, 'it is not very easy for you to promote a child who has not performed well'. Similarly, her counterpart in Elgonia observed that:

we know there is mass promotion. And as a school, we also look at it and then we say now, 'how do you promote such a person'. Because if you now keep on promoting, of course you are making that one go and fall out. Of course, that one will not perform well, then automatically that one will go away. It is better to organise that one, or keep that one, so that maybe if there's a possibility of change, then that one will have a better life in the future.

It is therefore evident that automatic promotion enjoys little support among the local education authorities. While the DEO and CCT for Eastern district acknowledged its viability, they were sceptical due to current practices and lack of inputs. On the other hand, the head teachers appeared to have complete lack of confidence in the policy.

The participants were also sceptical about the ban on corporal punishment. The government is currently conducting sensitisation in partnership with some NGOs, which includes training teachers about alternative disciplinary approaches. However, the CCT for Central district noted that pupils lack life-skills, which is posing a challenge to teachers:

you know teachers, some of them, they don't see these alternative measures working out, because we have not helped our children to develop life-skills like critical thinking, self-awareness. If you do something wrong, what is the impact of this, why should you do it, you know. So, alternative measures work well with children who have life-skills. Because if you counsel the child, the child will understand. And it is a process. So, teachers are not so patient to an extent of giving the child time to reflect.

The DEO for Eastern district, in turn, admitted that the ban has created difficulty. He observed that:

Now when the teacher wants to institute some bit of disciplinary measure, not a corporal punishment, now they say, 'you are against the law'. Like a child who has fought a friend, you could say, 'please lie down'. Why did you fight your friend'. Now you have to send them to call the parents again and then you begin talking to them. So, it complicates the system.

Similarly, Elgonia's head teacher empathised with the teachers. He noted that there is 'increased indiscipline in children' which leads teachers to contemplate corporal punishment. However, he noted that they are currently adapting by counselling pupils, as well as using 'minor disciplinary measure[s]' like calling their parent. However, the CCT for Eastern district sided with corporal punishment. He noted that there is rising pupil indiscipline which is undermining learning, which could be addressed by using corporal punishment. He observed that:

A learner who is not properly managed in class will not do much in class. And yet you know the stick will do much of the work; creating order, a stick, making sure children come to school, a stick, the father wants to send his child to go and collect

water, he says no, 'I will be caned when I go late'. So, a stick will create a very good standard for these children. There would be some obedience, respect for the rule of law would be there. But now the teachers have said fine, 'let the parents send their children in time. If they don't send in time, it is their problem. Let children come to school. If they get absent, it is their problem'. Even food, 'have you brought your food', 'no'. Don't send him away ... So, this alone has created a lot of laxity. There's no order.

The policy therefore appears to have met with scepticism, owing to existing structural challenges. While most of the participants strove for neutrality, their empathy with the teachers was unanimous, raising the question of their commitment in enforcing it. This might explain why government has chosen to vest this role in NGOs. However, all the participants appeared to be involved in communicating and monitoring the policy.

The sense-making regarding the school age policy also emerged in the data. There was strong support for the policy among the participants. The Elgonia parent representative applauded it because 'when the child is having six years and that one goes to Primary 1, that one cannot even disturb the teacher, when the teacher is teaching in the class. That one is capable of hearing what the teacher is saying'. However, the DEO for Eastern district blamed parents for the ongoing violation, since they send children of five years to school. The head teacher for Elgonia explained that:

our way of admitting them is just the head teacher to carry out registration of these children. Otherwise, most parents these days don't bring their children to school, especially in government schools ... they only send the child. It is even sometimes very difficult for us. When you ask a child in Primary 1, 'who is your father'. That one only answers you 'baba'. Tells you 'father' ... Maybe you use those ones in upper classes because they may be knowing their parents.

Underage children therefore easily bypass the enrolment system, which appears aimed at easing access. It is therefore clear that the local authorities feel incapable of enforcing the policy, which has resulted in their resigned attitude.

6.3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on analysing the contemporary context of UPE, drawing on field work data about the macro and meso layers in order to establish UPE's ecological properties. As in chapter five, my analysis aimed at responding to the study's first and second research question i.e.:

1. What are the emerging changes in the curriculum under UPE reform?
2. How are teachers responding to the curriculum changes?

I established that some limited change has occurred in UPE's structure such as GPE's more direct involvement in its funding. Furthermore, some new social structures have emerged at the districts level, most notable, the 'mushrooming' of private schools, whose growing influence has become a major concern for UPE schools. There has also been a significant improvement in the provision of inputs, although it is still inadequate. Similarly, the uptake of UPE policies continues to face bottlenecks. Thus, the reforms have resulted mainly in 'first order changes' so far (Priestley 2011a; Cuban 1998).

7 ECOLOGY OF MIREMBE

For various globalisation pressures there are also sites of resistance and counter movements.

Ball (1998)

7.1 Introduction

In chapters seven and eight, I focus on analysing the data collected from field work in the two cases study schools in Uganda. The goal of my analysis is to establish the ecological properties of the cases and how they are contributing in shaping teacher agency. I selected Mirembe Primary School in central region as my first case study, based on the criteria explained in my methodology. In the following section, I commence by describing Mirembe's profile in order to locate it within the wider Ugandan context.

7.2 Profile of Mirembe Primary School

Mirembe Primary School is located in a rural area in Central Uganda. It was founded by the Catholic church and was subsequently taken over by the government. There are several other UPE schools, as well as private primary schools in Mirembe's vicinity. The school has large classrooms each of which can hold over fifty pupils and are well stocked with desks. However, it lacks a classroom for primary three, which the DEO attributed to the lack of land. Thus, primary three lessons are conducted in the Catholic chapel, which sits in the middle of the school quadrangle. Furthermore, it has only one office, which is reserved for the head teacher. Its walls were covered with details of staff roles, student enrolments, timetables, school rules, duty rotas, performance reports and circulars in line with the 'talking office'³ policy (see USAID 2003). It also lacks staff accommodation, as well as a staffroom and therefore staff activities such as meetings, lunch etc. are held in the primary five classroom during recess.

In terms of administration, the school is run under the generic UPE structure, under which ultimate authority is vested in a school management committee (SMC). However, the

responsibility for daily management rests with the head teacher assisted by a deputy. On commencing my data collection at Mirembe, I found Ms Rose serving as the newly appointed head teacher. She had co-opted one of her teachers as the deputy, since a substantive one had not been appointed.

Mirembe had nine teaching staff, including one who is unqualified. Seven of them are designated as class teachers, each one responsible for a specific class. The highest staff positions i.e. senior man and senior woman teacher were substantively filled based on seniority, as stipulated under UPE policy. Furthermore, the SMC had gazetted positions of responsibility such as Head of Infant Section, Head of Middle Section etc., in addition to the traditional positions such as Director of Studies, to which teachers had been co-opted. The head teacher had also appointed teachers to head the subject departments. I selected three teachers as participants in my study. These were Ms Christine, Ms Aisha and Mr David.

The total student population of Mirembe at the time of my visit was under 250 pupils, which contrasts sharply with the district's average projected catchment of 470 pupils per school, according to the DEO. The pupil-teacher ratio stood at approximately 24:1 and the pupil-classroom ratio at 30:1. The head teacher acknowledged that Mirembe was under-enrolled, like most of the neighbouring UPE schools situated close to the main road. She attributed this to the 'mushrooming' of private schools, which many consider to be providing a better service (see World Bank 2013b; Zuze 2010). The nearest UPE school, located about one kilometre from Mirembe and possessing almost twice the infrastructure, had similarly seen its enrolment decline to under 240 pupils. Pupil absenteeism in Mirembe is high, estimated at about 30 per cent, which the participants attributed to parents involving their children in domestic chores, farming and petty trade (see also Byamugisha and Ogawa 2010; Trudell et al 2012). The majority of the pupils in Mirembe appeared to be young for their enrolled grade, indicating possible under-age enrolment. However, they appeared to be well-involved in school activities and to be well-treated by the staff.

The surrounding community which is home to Mirembe's pupils is inhabited by the *Baganda* ethnic group. It is a low-income rural area, whose people mainly thrive on subsistence farming and petty trade. According to the head teacher, many of the households

are headed by elderly people, some of whom are guardians to their grand-children, who study in Mirembe.

Recently, several private schools have opened in the community, mostly in response to the demand from parents who are dissatisfied with UPE. These schools provide instruction exclusively in English, contrary to the government policy. Most of them operate in small rented buildings and charge low tuition fees which some parents can afford. Parents with the means therefore send their promising children to these schools, while children from the poorer households, as well as weaker students are sent to UPE schools. They may later on be transferred to private schools when their performance improves, or if tuition fees becomes available.

Mirembe was undergoing a prolonged period of poor performance in the primary leaving examinations (PLE) at the time of my field work. It had not recorded any first-grade passes for some time, with the majority of its pupils passing in the second, third and fourth grades, like many other UPE schools following the programme's launch (see Ward et al. 2006; World Bank 2013b). Thus, it had fallen into the lower segment in the traditionally high achieving central region. Its best performance is traditionally registered in English and science. According to the primary four class teacher, her students' performance in English had improved, since the school abandoned the policy prescribing local language teaching and began teaching the lower classes in English. The head teacher confirmed that the communication of all new UPE policies had been received in Mirembe and they were under implementation. However, in the light of the above revelation, this is clearly not the case. The CCT also observed that in his view, only about forty percent of teachers in the district have a good understanding of UPE policy objectives.

When I returned to Mirembe after five months for phase two of my data collection, I found that some changes had occurred. Ms Rose, the head teacher had been transferred and replaced by a new head teacher. Christine, the class teacher for primary two, a participant in my study had gone on leave and a new female teacher had been appointed.

In the next section, I undertake an in-depth analysis of Mirembe's contextual factors i.e. its structure and culture, bearing in mind Ball et al.'s (2012, p. 19) contention that 'policies

enter different resource environments; schools have particular histories, buildings and infrastructure, staff profiles, leadership experiences, budgetary situations and teaching and learning challenges'. My aim is to relate Mirembe's emergence to its actual or potential impact on the teachers, as a prelude to my analysis of teacher agency in chapter nine.

7.3 Context of Mirembe

7.3.1 Structure

I identified several key social structures, both internal and external, that characterise Mirembe's ecology. These comprise of the generic structures highlighted in chapter two such as a district education department (DED), SMC, staff body, subject departments, the parents body (PGM) and the student body. In addition, Mirembe has unique/emerging structures such as its founding body – the Catholic church, a teachers' rotating fund or SACCO and neighbouring private schools.

In addition to its other statutory roles, I found that Mirembe's DED maintains contact with the school through one routine inspection every term (see also GOU 2010). This is coupled with occasional emergency/'flying' visits as the situation demands. The participant teachers revealed that they get opportunity to interact with the DED staff and provide feedback regarding their challenges. However, their feedback is most often channelled through the head teacher. The DEO however, admitted that he does not often forward teachers' complaints to the ministry (most probably for fear of being reprimanded, c.f. with section 8.3.1). This implies that the flow of information is curtailed.

As regards Mirembe's SMC, I found that it holds one meeting every term. The teachers revealed that it maintains a relationship of cooperation within the school. Christine observed that 'the school management committee helps us here so that we can interact with the parents and we talk about the problems about the school. So that they can give us solution'. The teachers, in general, expressed a positive outlook towards the head teacher. They hailed her practical approach to problem solving, commitment in providing instructional materials and for holding regular staff meetings. However, Aisha expressed

her dissatisfaction regarding incidences of micro-management by the head teacher. The head teacher emerged as slightly formal, though friendly and efficient, including to her teachers. This could partly be explained by the fact that she was only a year old in the post, compared to between one and five years for the participant teachers.

Within the teachers' body, interactions are mediated by among others, their 'code of conduct', subject departments and self-help associations such as their SACCO. The influence of the subject departments, however, appeared minimal since they were relatively inactive. The relationships among teachers therefore appeared to be characterised more by direct and informal interactions. The teachers revealed that they interact freely and solicit help from each other. Christine observed that 'our fellow teachers can help you do something he or she knows'. She explained that UPE has enhanced the interaction among teachers, who are compelled to take the initiative in order to find ways of overcoming its challenges. This proactive response by Mirembe's teachers concurs with both Priestley et al.'s (2015), as well as Ketelaar et al.'s (2012) conceptions of agency. Christine observed that:

This time teachers are equipped with more knowledge, because UPE is not easy in these schools. Children have a lot of problems, so when we interact, we can find solutions so that we can help these children.

Their cooperation was evident for example in how they merged classes and taught the students of their fellow teachers whom I was interviewing, which is apparently a common practice when a colleague is absent. Ultimately, I found that their supportiveness extends beyond academics, or the school's boundary, as they support each other financially through their rotating fund (SACCO) and in other times of crisis. Aisha explained that:

As teachers, for us we are cooperative. We are working together. Even if you are not present, other teachers can come and teach your lessons in your class. They can ask you, when you lost (sic) a relative, or any person related to you, they can cooperate and bring the condolence. And if you are near the school, they can send children to come and work simple, simple activities for example fetching water, washing plates.

Evidence of the good relationship among the teachers of Mirembe is therefore quite strong. Their mutual supportiveness and cooperation reflects Pyhalto's et al.'s (2014) notion of relational agency.

The parents body/surrounding community of Mirembe is another key structure, whose formal interaction with the school is facilitated by its termly parents' general meeting (PGM), alongside other day to day interactions. The relationship of parents to the school is to the largest extent underpinned by financial factors, coupled with government's measures to regulate it, in line with the policy of free education (see also Suzuki 2002). From my findings, Mirembe negotiated with parents to provide uniforms, scholastic materials, a monetary contribution for lunch, as well as the church, toilet paper, brooms and a piece of firewood daily, although policy restricts them to lunch, uniforms and scholastic materials. However, many parents shun their PGM and further reject making these contributions, which has created an atmosphere of tension and distrust (see MoES 2014a). Suzuki (2002) suggests that parents are usually reluctant to contribute when they feel that there is lack of accountability in the school (see also Higgins and Rwanyange 2005). Aisha observed that some parents have deliberately distorted the meaning of UPE to '*boona basooome*' (free education for all):

So, they misinterpret and say that the president Museveni is the one supposed to buy each and everything for their children here. Even books, these books, the exercise books, pens and other things. So that is bad. Even if you explain to them, others fail to understand. Up to now. Even yesterday, I found one parent on the way there and she said 'you, you are chasing our children. Money for exams? Museveni is the one who is paying that money for our children. Why do you chase them?'

Although the teachers acknowledged that the majority of the parents actively support their children, it is evident that considerable misunderstanding exists between them and parents.

Further interaction between the two bodies occurs in regard to the implementation of automatic promotion and the child rights policy. I found that teachers often invite parents whose children are performing poorly, in order to negotiate with them over retaining the

child in a particular grade. In such cases, the parent makes the final decision and their wishes are respected. Concerning the child rights policy, David noted that a teacher may sometimes err and violate the ban on corporal punishment, which strains the relationship with parents. He observed that:

You find a teacher caning a child for some simple, simple cases, but eventually the response which is done by the parent is taking the teacher to police. Therefore, that could not be a good relationship. That is a bad relationship. Therefore, what a teacher must be doing is to leave the child. Whether he messes or not, whether he performs or not, whether he attends classes or not.

Ultimately, the teachers emphasised that their interactions with parents requires patience and they point to their moderate success in attracting and retaining pupils as proof that their strategy is working.

A closely related and overlapping structure is that of the school's founding body, the Catholic church, to which many parents are members. Although the school is at present non-denominational, its relationship with the church is compelled by the presence of the church's representatives on its SMC and a chapel in its quadrangle, which doubles as the classroom for primary three. The church initiated a policy requiring every parent to contribute an annual fee regardless of their faith, which has proved unpopular and was castigated by one of the teachers. Furthermore, although it permits the school to use the chapel as a classroom, the daily prayers during lent at 3.00 pm, disrupts lessons forcing pupils to sit outside, often for hours. This resulted in a conflict between the school and the church, which climaxed with the church threatening to withdraw its permission. Although the crisis was resolved, the tension remains.

A core structure in Mirembe is its student body, which is officially represented by its prefects. Its relationship with the other structures is guided by UPE policies for example the child rights policy, as well as school rules and student records. The relationship between the staff and students appeared to be very warm and supportive. This was underscored by several posters in the head teacher's office encouraging the teachers to be supportive to the pupils.

Within the school environment, the routines I observed the pupils involved in such as raising the flags, returning course books, managing their attendance register or collecting chalk all appeared designed to encourage their participation and creating a friendly atmosphere. Furthermore, there was evidence of the teachers' genuine concern for the pupils for example through inviting their parents to discuss performance, or interventions like repeating a class. The school had further improved pupils' welfare by enforcing key policies like school feeding and uniforms. In each of my classroom observations, I noted a genuine rapport between the teachers and pupils. The teachers put effort into encouraging the pupils, while the pupils appeared to like the teachers. The teachers, however, acknowledged the existence of indiscipline cases, for example absenteeism, late-coming and occasional insubordination by the older pupils, among others. However, all the school's efforts appeared to be geared towards retaining their pupils and preventing transfers or dropouts.

As highlighted earlier in the chapter, neighbouring private schools are an important structure in Mirembé's ecology. Although their relationship is officially mediated by the DED, I discovered that it is characterised by high competition. Under UPE, the right to choose a child's school lies with its parents, which Suzuki (2002) sees as a contradiction to the spirit of 'community participation', by encouraging individual choice. UPE's 'parental choice' (see Ball 1998; Verger and Altinyelken 2012) system has resulted into considerable school-hopping, as parents target the best schools. The staff in Mirembé particularly blame the ubiquitous private schools for poaching their best students, on whom parents are willing to spend tuition fees. Aisha explained that:

Most of the parents take their children to those private schools. They put them in those private schools, after seeing that we have polished them. The good ones, they are the ones whom they take to those private schools. If they see that this girl does well in class, at the end of the year, you can find that child in another private school. And those private schools, they build their names after taking our cream ... children who are clever. They take them. If a parent sees that this one is clever, immediately to private school.

The private schools offer English based instruction at lower primary and incentives such as bursaries and free scholastic materials, which has enhanced their enrolment, whilst depleting Mirembe's. This has generated antagonism between the schools as noted in the teachers' comments.

A crucial aspect of Mirembe's ecology is the resource factor. It is highly problematic under UPE, as highlighted in chapters five and six. It is mainly dependent on teachers, parents, infrastructure, instructional materials and re-current expenditures. As a result of declining enrolment, Mirembe is characterised by a paradox of simultaneous abundance and scarcity. In terms of infrastructure, its six classrooms which are built to accommodate over fifty pupils each, currently hold on average 30 pupils each, leaving a lot of excess capacity. The same excess exists with respect to furniture. By contrast it lacks a classroom for primary three. Furthermore, it lacks a staffroom, leaving teachers to borrow the primary five classroom for their meetings and breaks. The lack of a staffroom limits the teachers' interactions, since they end up mostly confined to their classrooms. The school also lacks staff accommodation, which many teachers cite as the main cause of their late-coming and absenteeism (see Right to Education Project 2012; Ward et al. 2006; Byamugisha and Ssenabulya 2005; MoES 2009). All these challenges constrain the smooth running of the school.

A close parallel is evident in the status of instructional materials. While the school had adequate stocks of materials such as chalk, manila paper, curriculum and teachers' guides, it lacked the all-important course books for pupils. Furthermore, all the school's books were old and in tatters. I established that the pupil-course book ratio stood at approximately 5:1. In Aisha's English lesson which I observed, she had only three course books for the entire class. Christine explained that in some cases where no course book is available, they are advised to combine the curriculum and teachers' guide and use them to formulate content. The teachers are further coping through strategies like copying content on the chalkboard or sharing a copy of the course book with pupils, all of which affect time and class management. Furthermore, since all curriculum and teachers' guides are published in English, the teachers of the lower classes are forced to translate any section they wish to use into *Luganda*, which creates additional challenges.

As regards teachers, I found that Mirembe shares the situation reflected countrywide. It had only nine teachers, eight of whom are qualified and one unqualified teacher, who is hired part time. Seven of the teachers are designated as class teachers i.e. with the responsibility of delivering all the eight learning areas. Thus, they face a demanding schedule, which involves teaching on average, five learning areas over a five-hour period daily, while practising child-centred pedagogy and continuous assessment, which constitutes a heavy load (see also Altinyelken unpublished). To his credit, the CCT was making regular visits to train the teachers. However, poor remuneration, lack of staff housing and lunch was undermining the motivation of the teachers (see MoES 2014a). Aisha recalled regretfully how they would receive a PTA bonus and free lunch before the launch of UPE, while David decried the challenge of paying rent on his meagre salary. In order to cope financially, the teachers have therefore formed a rotating fund from which they borrow money. Ultimately, the condition of the teachers is undermining efforts towards improving instruction in Mirembe.

As discussed earlier, I found that parents make a significant contribution towards the resources in Mirembe by providing lunch, uniforms and scholastic materials for their children. In the case of recurrent expenditures, Mirembe receives a UPE capitation grant from the ministry to cater for administration, co-curricular activities and instructional materials. However, the head teacher explained that the amount, which is about \$540 for the entire year is insufficient to meet the schools' needs, 'because the school has got so many demands'.

7.3.2 Culture

The cultures under UPE include policies and artefacts. At the time of my visit, the dissemination of policies such as thematic teaching, local language teaching, automatic promotion, child rights, 'putting books in the hands of children' and the school age policy had occurred in Mirembe. Furthermore, the school had successfully negotiated a set of policies with parents. The teachers were also conversant with their 'code of conduct', as well as with the standing orders regarding their terms of service. In addition, the school was promoting the teachers' awareness of their code, as well as pupils' knowledge of the school rules using publicity posters in the head teacher office.

Ball et al (2012) suggest that policy enactment involves creative processes of interpretation and recontextualization involving the translation of texts into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices. Thus, I found a complex scenario regarding enactment in Mirembe. For example, thematic teaching and the child rights policy had been well received and were being implemented to a larger extent. Christine praised thematic teaching as enabling even habitually absent pupils to learn, since they teach a sub-theme for a full week. However, Mirembe had recently abandoned local language teaching. The school was therefore providing instruction for the lower classes in English, while the local language, *Luganda*, was now being taught as a subject. Among several reasons the teachers cited for this action was that local language teaching hampers the acquisition of English, teaching English subject exclusively in English is difficult with new learners, external prep exams are set in English and the work is tedious (see also Abiria et al. 2013). Their arguments concur with Priestley et al.'s (2012) contention that policy mutation is influenced by reflexive human agency (see also Spillane et al. 2002). Aisha who handles the transition from *Luganda* to English instruction in primary four lamented that:

I found a big, big problem when teaching these learners, especially in first term. Huh, you can fight with them. You can sweat and sweat. Those pupils! You can put there a subject for example SST, that is their first time to hear about the word SST, social studies, they don't understand. Most of the words are new to them because in those classes, they were learning in their local languages. So, you found (sic) a very big problem here in P.4 first term. It is very difficult to teach those children, because most of the subjects are new to them, except English, because in those classes, they teach English in English. But this science, SST, mathematics, you can find that they cannot understand the word. You can say add this, they can look at you like this ... add? ... what does the word add mean ... add? Every word! Most of the words are new to them. You can say, 'is it clear' and they also ... 'You repeat after me', they can also say, 'you repeat after me'. 'Is it clear', also they say, 'is it clear'. So, in first term, there is a big problem in this P.4 class.

She explained that it takes a full term to alleviate the challenge. She was therefore glad that the policy has been abandoned and applauded her pupils' improvement in English.

Similarly, automatic promotion had met with the resistance of the teachers and was not being fully implemented. Sannino (2010) suggests that resistance should be seen as early forms of agency, rather than as ‘inherent conservatism’ and ‘disruptive opposition’. Christine denounced automatic promotion as causing ‘half-baked pupils [to] go to next classes and those teachers find problems there’. The school had thus adopted a system of inviting a parent and seeking their permission to retain their child in a particular grade in case of poor performance. David explained that:

you cannot promote a child who is not fit to be promoted. But again, the policy could say that children should not stay in classes. But again, you cannot promote a child who cannot even read and write. Then at the end of the day you find that I should either neglect or not to perform better. Why? Because you can find all children must be promoted. And what we do these days, we at least adjust on the policies of the government. We call the parents and we discuss. Should we promote to such and such a child to the next class. It is the parent to decide.

As many parents tend to accept their advice, a wide violation of the policy is therefore taking place, as similarly observed by Lewin (2009) (see also MoFPED 2004).

Furthermore, Mirembe overlooks the school age policy, since it enrolls underage pupils. I learned from Aisha that the majority of the pupils in primary one were below the stipulated six years. I also found that the school is constrained from implementing the policy of ‘putting books in the hands of children’ due to the lack of readers and course books. However, it is largely conforming with the policies of continuous assessment and keeping pupil records. The teachers’ code of conduct and school rules are also largely being followed.

As regards the policies negotiated with parents such as providing school lunch, uniforms, scholastic materials etc., I found that the majority of the parents are complying, as discussed earlier. However, the reluctance of the minority had created considerable tension. The teachers blamed the defaulting parents for being insensitive, as some pupils attend class with no books, pens, or go without lunch, which concurs with O’Sullivan’s (2006) findings

that some children go hungry and find it difficult to concentrate as a result. Christine complained that:

They don't help their children. Because even the scholastic materials, they don't give them. They send pupils here at school without books. Yes, without pencils and other don't take lunch. Can you imagine? And even at home there is no food. So, we are struggling this way and the other people are doing what?

She explained that in such cases they send a note to the parent. This is coupled with giving reminders in the PGMs.

Furthermore, I found that Mirembe uses a wide range of documents such as enrolment, assessment and progress records, which partly help to facilitate continuous assessment. It also maintains records of routines such as a timetable and rosters, as well as sensitisation documents such as the teachers' code, school rules and health information. The teachers use schemes of work, lesson plans and learning charts, which indicates a growing professionalism on their part, probably resulting from increased training and supervision (see MoES 2009). The bulk of the documents, except for the personal or confidential ones are openly displayed in the classrooms and the head teacher's office, as guided by the 'talking school/office policy' (see USAID 2003).

The culture of Mirembe therefore emerges as essentially top-down, or supra/macro-driven, with little contribution by teachers. It is dominated by generic policies like local language teaching and automatic promotion, which originate from the supra/macro layers and thus suffer some lack of ownership by the teachers (see Fullan 1994). On the other hand, the contribution of parents which government left to the local authorities and schools to resolve is witnessing the emergence of the school feeding and scholastic materials policies that enjoy moderate acceptance by the stakeholders.

7.4 Biographies of the participant teachers

Based on the criteria explained in my sampling procedure, I selected three teachers as participants. These were Christine, Aisha and David. I interviewed each of them, as well as observed each conduct a lesson in order to establish their biographical attributes such as qualifications, skill, beliefs and attitude, which form the basis on which they respond to contextual issues in their achievement of agency, as contended by the ecological approach (Priestley et al. 2015; Biesta et al 2015). The biography of each teacher is discussed below.

7.4.1 Christine

Christine is the class teachers for primary two. She was the last teacher that I interviewed during the first phase of my field work in Mirembe. The session lasted about one hour. I was subsequently unable to get a second interview because she was on leave during the second phase. Christine possesses the required grade three teaching qualification and a wide teaching experience of fifteen years, gained from three UPE schools in the district. She was receiving under five hundred thousand shillings per month as salary (approx. \$135) and residing in her own home, approximately three kilometres from the school due to the lack of staff housing.

I conducted an observation of Christine's English lesson to get an impression of her teaching approach. She provided me with a scheme of work and lesson plan prior to starting the lesson, both of which were prepared following the recommended format. She then presented the lesson using a variety of methods and succeeded in getting the pupils actively involved (c.f. Altinyelken 2010b). She managed the class through techniques like paying attention to individual pupils and addressing them by name. She also made good use of teaching aids. Further observation revealed that her classroom walls were covered with self-prepared charts and the term's progress record.

However, Christine noted the pressure which the lack of course books places on her skills. She explained that:

we just form poems, rhymes, according to our experience, so that we can combine that poem with the theme to teach the pupils. Because we don't have them. We don't have reference books, except the curriculum and the teacher's guide.

As regards local language teaching, she noted that teachers are compelled to translate any section of the curriculum or teachers' guide that they wish to use into the local language, since both are written in English. She explains that as a result 'you have to move, interact with other teachers and ask them. So that you can get more information about what you are going to teach'.

With respect to attitude, I noted Christine's efforts towards professionalism, as displayed during the classroom observation. Furthermore, she emerged as optimistic about UPE, but sceptical about some policies. For example, she was broadly appreciative of UPE for improving pupils' access to education, as 'most pupils are in school'. Furthermore, she lauded the great improvements in infrastructure and other resources:

because these days we have buildings. Long ago people were studying from shades. That is an improvement. They have struggled to bring reference books in upper classes, maybe even for us they will give us. We are still waiting. Toilets are built. Even the tank is there.

She further hailed the introduction of the SMC, which is playing an important role in solving problems and nurturing good relationships in the school. She was also positive towards UPE for inspiring teachers to be more proactive and cooperative. She observed that 'these days teachers interact because the policy helped us to be free and to be open, so that you can get more information in order to help these pupils'. She further appreciated the role which regular training by the CCT is playing towards this change.

Christine also lauded the benefits of thematic teaching, which accommodates all pupils, as well as the school rules and regulations, which are facilitating the smooth running of the school. However, she underscored the frustration which teachers are experiencing due to the shortage of course books and the lack of a classroom for primary three. She was

similarly critical of local language teaching, which to her, hampers the acquisition of English and automatic promotion, which promotes ‘half-baked pupils’.

The lack of cooperation of some parents, who resist providing school requirements for their children also elicited her criticism. She lamented that:

for us we are struggling with the policies, but on the other side, parents know nothing about the policies, although they sensitise them. They don't take time to follow them.

However, she noted the proactive response that teachers are taking, for example by sending reminders to the defaulting parents, or temporarily providing the children with slates to write on. She was also bitter with private schools which poach their best pupils. She explained that:

the problem we have, the children we equip with knowledge, if they get good results, they go to other schools and those failures there are brought here. So that we struggle with them, after struggling with them, they take them.

She partly attributed the declining performance in Mirembe to this practice by private schools.

As regards professional beliefs, several studies, for example, Biesta et al. (2015), Priestley et al. (2015) and Pyhalto et al. (2014) have noted the role of teachers’ professional beliefs on their agency. My findings regarding Christine’s professional beliefs are that she takes pride in being a teacher and upholds its values. Her beliefs were manifest in her statements, as well as classroom practices. For example, when I probed about the habit of private schools poaching her best pupils, she observed that:

for us we keep on struggling with them, if they pick up, the parents take them. So long as they are in schools there. It is okay, because in our profession you are supposed to teach, teach, teach.

This reflects her value for her pupils' welfare. Furthermore, her praise to UPE for providing all pupils the opportunity to study reflected a similar value, as did her appreciation for thematic teaching and her attempts to mediate automatic promotion by encouraging poor performing pupils to repeat a class.

From observing her lesson, I also noted her belief in child-centred pedagogy, which was evident in the arrangement of her class in group format, as well as encouraging maximum participation from her pupils. Her regard for content knowledge also emerged in her observation that:

This time teachers are equipped with more knowledge, because UPE is not easy in these schools. Children have a lot of problems, so when we interact, we can find solutions, so that we can help these children.

Finally, I noted that Christine values her role and contribution as a UPE teacher. She obviously felt underappreciated, while playing what she believes is an important role. When I asked if she wanted to add anything at the end of the interview, she observed that:

for us we struggle because the quality of the pupils we have here, we receive is not good. Because these pupils, some of them don't have parents. They are orphans, they just stay with their grandparents and those grandparents, some of them don't take care about education. So, we are struggling and let us eat that money. So, we are struggling. Yeah, it is tiresome.

Christine's biography therefore reveals that she is a qualified, widely experienced and skilful teacher. Furthermore, she is proactive and concerned for her pupils' welfare. Due to her attributes, we therefore witness her respond with agency to the contextual challenges in Mirembe. For example, due to her skill, Christine prepares her own teaching charts in the context of the lack of teaching materials. Furthermore, due to her proactiveness, she seeks assistance in translating the curriculum into the local language. She also attempts to mediate automatic promotion out of concern for her pupils' welfare. Thus, it is evident that Christine is achieving agency on the basis of her attributes.

7.4.2 Aisha

Aisha is the class teacher for primary four. I interviewed her twice over a five months period. Each interview lasted about one hour. Like Christine, she is a qualified primary school teacher, holding a grade three certificate. She also had over nineteen years teaching experience, obtained in three schools. She had spent the last five years in Mirembe. Furthermore, she was in the same salary bracket as Christine, earning approximately \$110 per month. Aisha was also living in her own accommodation about half a kilometre from the school.

To get an impression of Aisha's teaching approach, I conducted an observation of her English lesson. She presented me with a scheme of work and lesson plan at the start of her lesson, which had been endorsed by the head teacher, unlike Christine's. She then delivered a lesson on 'vocabulary', placing emphasis on pupil participation. She twice, misspelt the words she was teaching on the chalkboard. When I later inquired, she revealed that of her nineteen years' experience, she had only spent three in teaching English (c.f. Ssentanda 2014). I also noted that the desks in her classroom were arranged in rows, by contrast to Christine's, which she explained was done on the head teacher's advice.

Aisha, similarly, reiterated the pressure which local language teaching is placing on teachers' skills. She explained the great difficulty which she is facing in facilitating her pupils' transition from *Luganda* to English as the pupils usually lack knowledge of how to do the translation (see also Ssentanda 2014). According to her:

you can find that in L2, they say, '*ekiwuka*', 'parts of an insect', they say '*ebitundu by'ekiwuka*'. They teach in mother tongue. When they come to this class and you tell them 'parts of an insect', they just look at you like this ... 'parts of an insect' ... 'what does it mean?' You can find that you take many minutes teaching one lesson. You can take an hour teaching only one lesson, because they don't know how to translate English in mother tongue. They don't know how to translate mother tongue in English. So, you find that it is very tiresome.

She explained that it takes considerable time to mitigate this challenge.

Aisha's attitude was largely receptive and proactive towards UPE. She was appreciative towards UPE as the source of her livelihood, as well as for the significant improvements it has brought to infrastructure. She was glad of the mitigation Mirembe adopted in swapping the study rooms for primary three and five, which enabled primary five to transfer from the chapel, since it requires a bigger chalkboard than the mobile one available there. Furthermore, she was proud of the head teacher's efforts in ensuring the availability of teaching materials, despite the shortage of course books.

Aisha was also appreciative of the largely good relationships within the school. She noted that teachers are cooperative, both in day to day interactions, as well as in times of crisis. There is also cooperation between the different school structures like the SMC and teachers, as well as with parents. She observed that:

If you find a problem, you can communicate to your colleagues, plus the management committee, plus the parents. You can communicate to them and they can come and assist you in the problem.

She was therefore glad that the mutual cooperation is enabling the school to increase its enrolment as more parents are now willing to enrol their children in the school. She further lauded the benefits of the policies negotiated with parents, which have significantly improved the welfare of pupils. She observed that:

the policies we have managed to put up in this school, they managed to develop our school. Because last year, these pupils, most of them were not taking lunch. And we teachers were finding it difficult to teach these pupils in afternoon. Afternoon lessons most of the pupils were dozing because of being hungry. So, when we brought that policy, now pupils in evening hours they are very happy, you can teach when they are following. Yes, because of taking lunch here at the school. Even on the side of the school uniforms, children come to school when they are smart. They are easily identified, even if you find a child in the shops there, you can easily identify that this one belongs to our school.

On the other hand, Aisha was highly critical of both local language teaching and automatic promotion, which have been abandoned by the school. She attacked automatic promotion as a policy that undermines learning acquisition by pupils and endorsed the staff's collective decision to abandon it. She explained that:

... but automatic promotions, we are no longer using them, because children were just going in other classes, but when they reach in those classes, they fail to understand what the teachers are teaching, because things which the teacher is teaching is above the level of that child. So nowadays we are no longer making automatic promotions here.

Similarly, she condemned local language teaching for obstructing English language acquisition and complicating her work. Her attitude towards the school-age policy was also non-committal, which appeared to mirror the general outlook in Mirembe. Furthermore, Aisha declared herself opposed to one of her school's internal policies, which stipulates that every parent must contribute an annual fee to the Catholic church:

because there are those children who are *balokole* (born again), there are those children who are protestants, there are those children who are Muslims, which is not good to force them to pay that money.

She noted that the policy had not been endorsed unanimously.

Aisha also expressed frustration regarding the lack of course books, which makes teaching complicated. She explained that she is often forced to copy a picture on the chalkboard, despite being poor at drawing, or to share a course book with her pupils, which wastes time and disrupts classroom control. She observed that:

you can find that other pupils they cannot be attentive to what you are teaching them. Even the class can be not well controlled, because of using those few textbooks. Others are not seeing well, others are abusing others, others are leaning against their friends. So, you can find that even when you are teaching, even you

cannot be able to see those ones who are playing. For example, you are sharing one book with your pupils.

The attitude of the Catholic congregation, which includes the parents of some pupils in Mirembe also elicited Aisha's criticism. She decried the disruption which they usually cause to primary three lessons during lent. She explained that:

They can find you already written [sic] some notes on the chalkboard and they force you to get out with your children. You can find in other classes, teachers are teaching and you can be outside for a very long period. There are no shades here. You can be in the sunshine for very many hours without being given anywhere to put your children, even if it is a rainy season.

She similarly criticised the lack of cooperation of some parents, who shun providing scholastic materials for their children. Like Christine, she was also highly resentful of private schools, whom she criticised for the practice of poaching the best pupils from Mirembe.

With regard to her professional beliefs, Aisha is primarily focused on the welfare of her pupils. She lauded Mirembe's supportive aspects such as the policies negotiated with parents, which had significantly improved pupils' welfare. Furthermore, she declared her preference for demonstration teaching, due to what she sees as its effectiveness in fixing learning to the pupils' benefit. Responding to my question on what she values most in her profession, she gave the highest rating to her pupils' achievement, which indicates her values. On the other hand, she criticised her school's shortcomings such as the inadequate infrastructure and instructional materials, as well as policies like automatic promotion, local language teaching and the mandatory contribution for the Catholic church. All these indicate her values as primarily focused on her pupils' welfare.

Aisha's biography therefore reveals that she is a qualified and widely experienced teacher, although relatively less skilled than Christine. She is also sociable, pro-active and mindful of her pupils' welfare. Thus, due to her attributes, we witness her achieving agency in several respects. For example, due to her sociable approach, we note her contribution in

enhancing the collegial culture in Mirembe, which has benefitted the school through improved enrolment. Furthermore, out of concern for her pupils' welfare, we witness her active participation in enhancing her school's feeding program. We also witness her sharing course books with her pupils due to her proactive outlook.

7.4.3 David

David is the class teacher for primary six. As in Aisha's case, I succeeded in interviewing him during both phases of the field work, each session lasting about one hour. He is a qualified primary school teacher, holding a grade three certificate, although relatively less experienced compared to the other two, since he possessed six years teaching experience. Nevertheless, he was earning a similar pay, approximately \$125 per month. He was also renting accommodation approximately eight kilometres away and lamented the huge burden this places on his salary.

I, similarly, conducted a classroom observation for David in order to get an impression of his teaching approach. He delivered the lesson without a scheme of work or lesson plan. Furthermore, he taught from memory, making no reference to any teaching guide or other materials. He also delivered most of the lesson in the local language, contrary to what the policy stipulates i.e. that upper classes should be taught exclusively in English. However, I found him to be a good communicator, who had built strong rapport with his pupils. Furthermore, I discovered that he has a fair knowledge of pedagogy. For example, in response to my question about what teaching methods he usually employs, he explained that:

I usually use what we call chalk and talk. That one is more understandable by my students. And I usually by the time they were (sic) promoted to different classes where I teach, I outline the methods. They pick out the best ones. Because I keep on say explain, I talk about the explanation, discussion, I talk about discussion. We have the lecture method, question and answer and again we have chalk and talk. For them they prefer what we call chalk and talk. You talk at the same time you write on the blackboard.

With respect to attitude, David is appreciative of the benefits of UPE, both to himself and to his pupils. He applauded UPE as his source of livelihood, as well as for providing pupils the opportunity to study. He observed that:

I feel that at least children have now come from villages to schools. That is something which I could regard as something that with UPE schools, there is at least some improvement. We have now tried to reduce on illiteracy of most children in different areas.

Furthermore, he commended the adequacy of furniture and some teaching materials, which has eased his work. He was also appreciative of the improvements in infrastructure, particularly the construction of a new pit latrine, which he attributed to the efforts of the head teacher. David also hailed the good relationship among the teachers, as well as with the administration. He also made a stronger attempt than his colleagues to empathise with the parents. He noted that ‘those ones who are cooperative, they are not in position. They are willing but unable’, thus acknowledging the constraint which poverty places on the parents. Although, he expressed his satisfaction with the in-service training, when I probed further, he observed that ‘I am twenty percent satisfied, not a hundred percent’.

On the other hand, David was highly critical of the lack of teachers’ accommodation, as well as Mirembe’s ‘congested’ environment due to the shortage of land. He lamented that:

what could affect my work, is the working environment. The working environment is not good. We are renting houses, we are coming from far distances. What I could say is that maybe the board of governor or the management committee should at least construct teachers' houses, so that teachers could be in position to reach school in time.

He similarly deplored the lack of a staffroom, which denies teachers ‘confidentiality’ and the space to prepare for lessons. However, he was particularly pessimistic about teaching in the chapel. He lamented that:

You cannot make those children to pass. They sit in a crooked way, if you see the appearance of the blackboard it is not good. And you cannot even feel comfortable. They are looking at pictures of the Maria Gorreti. It is not a very good learning environment. The place was designed for these people who had reported there to consume the word of God.

David further decried the attitude of the church community. He noted that its leaders are not so cooperative and often threaten to stop them from using the church. He similarly expressed frustration regarding the pressure which is emerging from private schools.

Furthermore, David shares his colleagues' negativity towards some UPE policies like automatic promotion and local language teaching. For example, he attacked automatic promotion which government adopted in order to utilise resources more efficiently, but which according to him, ends up wasting a pupil's time. He observed that:

government could not need children to repeat classes, because it is said that, that could be wastage of money. It had wanted to at least each child to benefit from the government's money. Therefore, we should keep on pushing them, pushing them, so that even the rest could benefit, but that one is not good, because you can send a weaker child, that at the end of the day, who is to blame. Those are the teachers. They wasted my time.

Similarly, he condemned local language teaching in the lower classes, whose effects spill over into the upper classes. Consequently, he has to keep switching to *Luganda* in order for his primary six pupils to understand (see Abiria et al 2013). He had thus supported the school's decision to abandon these policies. Finally, I found that David shares his colleagues' optimism about improving the enrolment in Mirembe. He revealed that together as staff, they had devised a plan of moving from home to home during the holidays explaining the benefits of Mirembe to the community.

As regards his professional beliefs, David's overriding concern is focused on the welfare of his pupils, as similarly noted with his colleagues. This was evident in his concern about the adequacy of infrastructure, as well as teaching materials. Similarly, it was evident that

his rejection of both automatic promotion and local language teaching, as well as his criticism of the attitude of parents and the church community stem from the same concern.

Finally, as I discovered with his fellow participants, David attaches a high value to his role as a primary school teacher. He explained that:

primary teachers, they need to be paid a lot of money, why? To make those children to have at least something which is knowledge. To get them from childhood to somebody who could perform better at PLE, it is not something easy ... One of the hated professionals in Uganda are the primary teachers, because we do strain ... we have to stay with the child, so that we can make him or her a good citizen. During that process, one could say that we keep on ... to make that child to come out as a good citizen, it is a struggle.

Thus, it is evident that David feels the need for a greater appreciation of his role.

The analysis of David's biography therefore reveals that he is a qualified teacher, although relatively less experienced and skilled compared to Christine and Aisha. He is also resourceful and mindful of his pupils' welfare. Thus, due to his resourcefulness, we witness him achieving agency, for example, through jointly devising a plan to visit the surrounding community and market the benefits of his school. We also find that he rejects both automatic promotion and local language teaching out of concern for his pupils' welfare.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I undertook an in-depth analysis of the Mirembe's ecology, which addressed the study's first, second and third questions i.e:

1. What are the emerging changes in the curriculum under UPE reform?
2. How are teachers responding to the curriculum changes?
3. What are the emerging features of teacher agency as manifested in their responses to curriculum reform?

I established that Mirembe is undergoing a mixed experience with regard to reform. For example, while the school enjoys good internal relations, it is simultaneously experiencing external challenges from both parents and private schools. Furthermore, the school lacks critical resources in the form of instructional materials, as well as some infrastructure. It is also characterised by non-compliance with some policies such as local language teaching and automatic promotion.

The teachers' biographies revealed that they are all qualified, relatively experienced and skilled. Furthermore, they are each achieving agency in addressing the contextual 'gaps' in their school. This was evident in their various initiatives such as developing their own teaching materials, mediating automatic promotion or helping to develop the schools' feeding program.

8 ECOLOGY OF ELGONIA

no education system can be better than the quality of its teachers, nor can a country be better than the quality of its education.

(GOU 1992)

8.1 Introduction

In chapter eight, I focus on analysing the field work data from my second case, Elgonia Primary School. While Elgonia is a high achieving school in Eastern district, its performance roughly corresponds with Mirembe's due to regional disparities. This, coupled with other typical features of UPE such as government ownership, rural location/infrastructure, understaffing, school facilities grant (SFG) funding, shortage of instructional materials and local language teaching in lower primary, provide a strong basis for comparison between the cases.

I commence by describing Elgonia's profile, followed by an in-depth analysis of its ecology in relation to Mirembe's. Furthermore, I examine its contribution in shaping teacher agency.

8.2 Profile of Elgonia Primary School

Elgonia Primary School is located in a rural area in Eastern Region. It was founded by Church of Uganda and subsequently taken over by the government. Like Mirembe, it has several neighbouring UPE schools, as well as private primary schools. The buildings in Elgonia are old, but in good condition. The classrooms are large and can hold between one hundred to two hundred pupils each. Furthermore, they are stocked with sufficient desks. Like Mirembe, Elgonia has only one office, no staffroom and no staff accommodation. The single office belongs to the head teacher. However, it was furnished with desks, which were being shared by all the staff. Furthermore, it was activated as a 'talking office' with several information charts and posters.

The school is managed under the generic UPE administrative system which is co-ordinated by the head teacher Mr John, who had held the position for five years. He was being deputised by the primary six class teacher on a volunteer basis, as the district had not appointed a substantive deputy. Mr John revealed that the school was regaining stability following its conflict with the community over the school's land and other property.

Elgonia has twelve teachers as opposed to the allotted sixteen, seven of whom are class teachers, while the remaining five are subject teachers. At the time of my visit, all the positions of responsibility had been filled. I selected three teachers to participate in the study, including Ms Juliet, Mr Robert and Mr Charles, all of whom were the respective English language teachers for their classes.

The enrolment in Elgonia was over 800 pupils at the time of my visit. According to the head teacher, the enrolment had surpassed 1,200 pupils prior to the construction of some neighbouring schools. The current pupil-teacher ratio is approximately 66:1, while the pupil-classroom ratio is roughly 117:1, which is still high. From my observation, the worst affected class was primary six, where I observed a lesson with over seventy pupils. However, Elgonia experiences high pupil absenteeism, which impacts on their actual daily attendance (see Lewin 2009). Nevertheless, the DEO revealed that he had forwarded a proposal for more classrooms to be built to enable streaming. The pupils of Elgonia, however, appeared to enjoy a good relationship with the staff and to be well-involved in school activities.

The PLE attainment in Elgonia roughly corresponds with that of Mirembe, despite its being among the best performing schools in Eastern district. This is due to the high regional disparity in performance in Uganda. The majority of Elgonia's pupils pass in second, third and fourth grades, with an occasional one or two first grades, despite the high failure rate in the district, which reached forty percent in 2015. In addition, the school's performance in English is fair, despite its adherence to local language teaching. Furthermore, all UPE policies had been received in the school and were in the process of being implemented.

Elgonia serves the surrounding *Sebei* tribe. It is a rural community characterised by low incomes, which is mainly derived from subsistence farming and cattle keeping. The area's

livelihood is currently threatened by extensive soil erosion, which is destroying soil fertility. As a result, land conflict is rife, from which the school has not been spared. According to the head teacher, he commenced his tenure in the midst of a land conflict, which has not been fully resolved.

Several private schools have recently opened in the community. They offer attractive incentives, including English based instruction and their enrolment has increased steadily, currently standing at between 150 to 250 pupils each. Many parents, including UPE teachers are therefore opting to transfer their children from UPE schools like Elgonia to these private schools.

8.3 Context of Elgonia

8.3.1 Structure

Like Mirembe, I found that Elgonia is characterised by UPE's generic social structures such as a district education department (DED), SMC, staff body, subject departments, parents' body (PGM) and its student body. Furthermore, it has unique/emerging structures such as its founding body - the Church of Uganda, a teachers' SACCO, a club, private schools and a private examinations body. Its DED officials visit the school once a term to conduct inspections. Despite this, Elgonia's teachers felt more isolated compared to Mirembe's. Charles, the primary six English teacher observed that they rarely get the opportunity to give feedback. He noted that:

we have no meetings with these people. Even if you give the headmaster, that one goes, they go and bark at him in the office there because of other issues. They say your teachers are coming here. He may not even have time to deliver the information. So, there's no good mechanism.

It therefore appears that some issues which affect teachers may fail to be addressed due to such bottle-necks. However, the teachers acknowledged that the CCT regularly visits their school to conduct training.

Elgonia's SMC regularly meets once a term like Mirembe's. Some of its meetings are open to the teachers and parents to attend. The SMC takes the lead in coordinating the school's feeding programme, among others. The teachers noted that their relations with it had improved after it cut back on interfering in the daily running of the school. This might have occurred in the first place, due to its members' lack of clarity about their role (see Suzuki 2002).

As regards the head teacher's role, the teachers commended him for being 'active' and nurturing a team spirit in the school. They noted, for example, his regular convening of meetings, as well as active supervision and motivation of teachers. Furthermore, his co-opting of one teacher as his deputy, as well as assigning headships based on consensus, reflected this approach. According to Robert:

We just elect people. When we are carrying out a meeting, for example the meeting for term one, that is when responsibilities are allocated. We just agree together in a round table whom to give such and such a responsibility.

Pertaining to the staff body, their interactions are largely informal, despite the existence of subject departments and associations. As in Mirembe, the departments are largely inactive. The main reason cited by the teachers was their excessive workload. Charles explained that:

meetings are not frequently organised by the departments. Because here we have a lot of work. People move from very long distances, they reach here they just move to the office to sign and they go and teach.

However, when the need arises, they discuss informally. For example, according to Juliet:

when you find difficulty in teaching maybe a word in the mother tongue or any new given policy, we come round all of us as teachers, we share. 'Please how do you handle such and such a situation'. So, with the group or with our team, we come out with the solution.

The teachers had also introduced a weekly raffle, which they commended for bringing them closer together.

On the part of the parents/community, their interactions with the school occurs mostly through SMC meetings. Elgonia had agreed with the parents to provide uniforms, scholastic materials, food items and money for buying prep exams for their children. In addition, the parents had accepted to provide oxen for ploughing the school land. The teachers noted that parents are now becoming more cooperative, after their initial reluctance, following the launch of UPE (see Suzuki 2002). Juliet observed that:

Before the UPE, the parents could be responsible for their children. But when UPE came, they said no, we have free education. And they are not even responding, when you ask them for money for anything, they also leave the children without buying even uniform. They think maybe the UPE will give them ... Because they believe there's free education. But we have tried to talk to them and now they are able to cope up, so they are assisting. When we send the children for anything, they can also give.

However, there is lingering distrust, which is often directed at teachers. Charles explained that:

Very many parents do not look at teachers as people who are good ... last year I was a teacher P7, I only sent children to bring firewood to use during exams. ... The parent came here seriously, very furiously wanting to beat me ... 'that why did you send my child home for firewood. Is there no school forest?' Now that one was a clear indication that they don't have some positive attitude towards the teachers.

Furthermore, some parents reject teachers' attempts to mediate the automatic promotion policy by practising repetition.

As regards the student body, the staff are quite supportive. For example, lunch is currently provided to the pupils at school due to the school feeding policy passed by the school.

Furthermore, Elgonia follows the enrolment policy of UPE, whereby pupils are enrolled with minimum inconvenience. Robert observed that:

we are now receiving new pupils every day. You can't chase those pupils that, 'where were you for the last days'. So, you just admit and then you just endure. Because we can't chase somebody's child. Secondly, UPE belongs to all the pupils; you are not supposed to segregate.

Thus, although the school is over enrolled, it is continuing to take in new pupils. However, some violation of the ban on corporal punishment was going on, which infringes on the children's rights.

The Church of Uganda which is Elgonia's founding body is another key structure. It currently occupies two seats on the SMC but is relatively inactive. Similarly, the private schools in Elgonia's vicinity are having relatively little impact, in contrast to Mirembe. This is mainly due to Elgonia's over enrolment.

Pertaining to resources, Elgonia's status is dependent in its infrastructure, instructional materials, teachers, parents' contributions and re-current expenditures. Elgonia's infrastructure comprises large classrooms, which are well stocked with furniture. Each classroom can hold between 100 to 200 pupils. The average class size currently stands at over 100 pupils, due to over enrolment, which is straining the capacity of teachers. This is a common challenge under UPE as noted by several studies (Byamugisha and Ogawa 2010; Nakabugo et al. 2008; O'Sullivan 2006; Deininger 2003). Charles noted that:

It has indeed affected the way I teach, because coping up with a very large number of children in the class is very hard. You cannot attend to the slow learners because the class is very big, time is not there to put those people aside and talk to them separately. Then another thing, marking and then doing corrections. While you are rushing to go to another class, you are expected to prepare some of the learning-teaching materials. In fact, time is almost becoming small, when you try to apportion it. P7 is there, you need to rush there.

Streaming has not been implemented due to the lack of extra classrooms. Elgonia also lacks staff accommodation, as well as a staffroom, all of which are adversely affecting the delivery of lessons (see also Right to Education 2012; Ward et al. 2006; Byamugisha and Ssenabulya 2005; MoES 2009).

As regards instructional materials, Elgonia had sufficient stocks of chalk and manila paper. It also had curriculum guides and teachers' guides, which were in good condition. However, the teachers revealed that their new guides do not match with the curriculum, which is forcing them to revert to the old ones. Robert described the new guides as 'shallow'; he explained that:

the textbooks which we were using at that time were matching with the curriculum, but the curriculum of nowadays, many of the books have not been printed. So, the curriculum is just there, but the textbooks are lacking.

Furthermore, Elgonia lacks course books, with the ratio currently standing at approximately 6:1. In some extreme cases like music, dance and drama, it had no course books at all. Thus, like in Mirembe, the teachers are adapting by copying content on the chalkboard or on manila paper.

Regarding teachers, the school's status mirrors the countrywide situation, which is characterised by shortages (see Altinyelken 2010a). Elgonia had been assigned twelve teachers to cover its 800 plus pupils, which gives a pupil-teacher ratio of roughly 66:1. Like in Mirembe, seven of the teachers are designated as class teachers, while the remaining five are subject teachers. The staffing challenge is exacerbated by the frequent transfers of teachers. Charles recounted how he struggled, following his transfer to a distant school, which forced him to petition the DED. His response concurs with Ketelaar et al.'s (2012) contention that high agency individuals may resist change that conflicts with their views. Charles explained that:

I told those people, 'I am not producing any good work. Unless you have taken me to be lazy there.' That is what I told them. Because I go there, I leave early because I come from far. By 2.30 pm, I tell the headmaster, 'it is about to rain. Let me leave

the place'. So, when I am here I stay until 5.00 pm, because it is a walkable distance. So, they brought me back after three years.

Elgonia also provides free lunch to its teachers from the produce harvested from the school garden. As earlier discussed, Elgonia parents support their children through providing food items and scholastic materials, among others. Finally, like Mirembe, Elgonia receives a capitation grant to cover recurrent expenditures. However, the teachers criticised its inadequacy, as well as delayed remittance (see Kayabwe and Nabacwa 2014; Oonyu 2012).

8.3.2 Culture

The culture of Elgonia, like Mirembe's, comprises of policies and artefacts, among others. I established that all the UPE policies had been disseminated in Elgonia, which includes thematic teaching, local language teaching, automatic promotion, 'putting books in the hands of children', child rights and the school age policy. This involved the use of workshops to disseminate thematic and local language teaching, while the other policies had been communicated through circulars. Juliet explained that the training workshops had helped to enhance her local language teaching skills (c.f Altinyelken 2010a):

It has helped me so much because, you know *Kupsabiny* has been difficult. When we were taken for that refresher course, I am now able to write in *Kupsabiny* and teach also in *Kupsabiny*.

However, only thematic teaching and local language teaching are being fully implemented in Elgonia, amidst reluctance from the teachers. Juliet revealed that she opposes thematic teaching because it divided literacy into two subject areas, making it more difficult to teach. The teachers also criticised the new curriculum for being rigid, and sketchy, as well as lacking the relevant textbooks (see MoES 2009). Robert noted that some crucial topics were omitted during its review, which they are now opting to teach on their own.

Local language teaching was also criticised by the teachers. Among their complaints are that teaching in *Kupsabiny* is difficult, it ignores minority language groups, obstructs the

acquisition of English and poses a disadvantage to the pupils, since external prep exams are set in English. Juliet observed that:

our language is difficult. Now when it comes to our class, like in my class, you have the *Gishu* clan group and then the *Sabiny*. So, talking again in *Kupsabiny* may not help the *Gishu*. It only centralises on the *Sabiny* and then I cannot help the other one now ... But of course, if you are not skilled, to read even is a problem. *Kupsabiny* is not meat and bread. It is a hard subject, hard language.

While the policy is still being followed, the teachers are therefore advocating for its annulment.

Conversely, automatic promotion, the child rights policy and the school age policy were only being partially implemented. Automatic promotion, which the teachers perceive as an obstacle to learning, is being vehemently opposed and actively mediated by the teachers. Juliet explained that:

Mass promotion, to me I feel it should not be, because there are those ones who need to repeat and to be guided properly before they go to another class. That is what I feel that it should not be mass promotion. So that we assist the slow learners.

The teachers therefore apply what they call a 'local arrangement', which is similar to Mirembe's approach. However, the parents' resistance in Elgonia is stronger, especially among those with children in upper primary. Charles explained that:

When you try to ask the child to repeat, the parent comes that, 'government is saying no repetition. Let my child go and do the exams in the next class. Let him or her try the next class'. They say, 'now she is aged' - like these young girls. When you try to explain to the parents that even if the girl is aged and has nothing, the age cannot do anything. 'Let her remain behind until she can write something'. So, the problem we have been having is that even most parents come here to fight us. They even report us to the DEO's office that our children have not been registered, most especially in P7.

The ban on corporal punishment is also not being fully observed as mentioned earlier. Some of the teachers criticised it for fomenting indiscipline and undermining achievement. Robert observed that:

I think pupils of UPE schools, some of them are undisciplined, just because they know there are rights which protect them. So, they just do anything they wish. So, they just do anything, knowing that nothing will be done against them.

This is further complicated by like-minded parents, who instruct the teachers to cane their child as a motivation strategy. Charles observed that:

even if the government is saying don't punish those who are doing wrong, some are coming secretly to say you punish mine, so that he can do better because the policy says no corporal punishment. Most parents are realising that children when caned are disciplined only to perform better, not to be beaten badly. So, they have now come up with secret plans that, 'you teach mine and punish them. Those who don't want theirs to be punished, leave them aside'.

However, following an NGO's adoption of the policy's oversight, teachers are beginning to take up other disciplinary methods.

The implementation of the school age policy is facing the indifference of teachers and parents. The teachers blamed parents for sending underage children to school. Juliet noted that 'at times some of them, they send the young ones to accompany even the younger ones. But they are not getting what they are teaching'.

Pertaining to the artefacts used in Elgonia, they include enrolment and progress records, plus documents pertaining to routines, for example, duty rosters, attendance registers and health posters. Some of the documents had issues, for example, some teachers criticised Elgonia's use of an attendance register, which they say focuses on absenteeism, while downplaying its causes. Elgonia also lacked written policy briefs to guide the teachers. Furthermore, it lacked a written *Kupsabiny* orthography. However, the teachers regularly use instruments such as schemes of work and lesson plans, which reflects their growing

professionalism. Lastly, all the documents, except for the confidential ones, were openly displayed in line with the ‘talking office’ policy.

8.4 Biographies of the participant teachers

In the following sections, I discuss the biographies of the participant teachers Juliet, Robert and Charles. As in the previous chapter, my analysis focuses on establishing their attributes such as qualifications, skill, beliefs and attitude and highlighting how they contribute in shaping the teachers’ agency.

8.4.1 Juliet

Juliet is the class teacher for primary two, as well as the Senior woman teacher and head of co-curricular. I interviewed her twice over the course of four months, each interview lasting about one hour. She possesses a grade three teaching certificate and has over twenty-five years’ teaching experience in two schools, of which she had spent the last twenty in Elgonia. I discovered that her monthly salary is under four hundred fifty thousand shillings (approx. \$125) and that she lives in her own home due to the lack of staff accommodation.

I conducted an observation of Juliet’s English lesson to get an impression of her teaching approach. She commenced the lesson after presenting me with her scheme of work and lesson plan, although they were not fully updated. She presented the lesson using a combination of drills and audio-lingual chorus, with elements of child-centredness such as participation and groupwork. She also made use of self-prepared learning charts. She succeeded in getting good learner participation in the lesson (c.f. Ssentanda 2014).

I learnt that Juliet had participated in the orientation workshops for the thematic curriculum, which she commended for enhancing her local language teaching skills, although she noted that it was not enough. She also highlighted some pedagogical strategies which she is currently adopting. She observed that ‘when I am teaching music, then it must be demonstration. Then when I am coming to free-activity, then I must use discovery method’, which indicates her skilful selection of methods (c.f. Altinyelken 2010b). Juliet had also

improvised a system of grouping her pupils based on ability, in order to monitor their progress. She explained that:

Like in my class, what I do is, I look at the best one, I give to their row. The other ones which are medium comes to this one and the other ones which are very slow, in the other row. So that I will be able to help them in the way they are supposed to be. Because when I just teach them like that, the other ones will be faster and this one will be somehow better, but the other ones will be left behind all the time. So, what I do is, I have to teach and then when I check the other ones; much of the time I spend on these slow learners to help them to come up.

Regarding attitude, Juliet endorsed UPE both as her source of livelihood, as well as for improving the learning conditions in Elgonia. She noted that ‘when this UPE came, they came and helped us with a lot of learning aids, which of course promotes the learning of a child’. Furthermore, Juliet is striving to be professional, which I noted in her use of appropriate pedagogies and teaching instruments in her classroom.

She is critical of the large classes in Elgonia. She noted that she experiences difficulty in teaching her large class. Furthermore, she opposes automatic promotion, as well as local language teaching on the grounds that they undermine learning. She noted that local language teaching is discriminatory and is thus advocating for its annulment:

there should be some change that they should allow us to teach in English for the sake of promoting education in our schools. When you look at the private schools, they teach English right from nursery to P7 and that’s why they are performing better. But when you come to UPE schools, we are supposed to teach in vernacular, P1, P2, even up to P3. We begin now teaching in English in P4. And all these three classes affects so much and that is why the performance is not all that.

She further criticised thematic teaching, in contrast to Mirembe’s teachers. She blamed it for splitting literacy into two subject areas, which has made it more difficult to teach, a challenge which has also been noted by Ssentanda (2014). Juliet observed that:

The old curriculum was very nice, but this one, we were just forced conditionally. Because there are so many changes they are just dipping (sic) you to follow. But the other one of course there was flexibility. But this one now, it is instructed, you have to follow

Juliet is also concerned about Elgonia's adoption of an attendance register to monitor teachers. She argued that it downplays their challenges, while focusing on absenteeism. She was also irked by the rampant late-coming and absenteeism among the pupils, which she partially attributed to their parents. She observed that:

you may need to teach the subject, but the children arrive late, so you find that you may not teach them all. The other ones may arrive late when you have already entered in the middle of the subject. Then it becomes difficult for you to help the other one, because already the subject is ahead. There's also a problem in a community. The community is not so much responsible, as far as sending their children early to school. You find, the teacher may arrive here early, the children will come very late and then you may not be able to help in the way you wanted to do.

As regards her professional beliefs, it is evident that Juliet attaches high priority to her pupils' learning, which Biesta et al. (2015) have noted among the key aspirations of teachers. This was evident both in her emphasis on using locally prepared learning charts, as well as in monitoring her pupils' progress. Furthermore, it was evident in her opposition to local language teaching, automatic promotion and the large classes in Elgonia. It was also clear that Juliet attaches high value to the creative input of teachers, which was discernible from her criticism of the new curriculum's rigidity.

The above analysis of Juliet's biography therefore reveals that she is a qualified teacher, with wide experience and skills. Furthermore, she attaches high value to her pupils' learning, whilst opposing the policies and conditions that hinder it. Thus, from the combination of her skill and concern for her pupils' learning, we find that Juliet achieves agency through ventures like preparing her own teaching charts, amidst the shortages in Elgonia, as well as devising her own system for monitoring her pupils' progress.

8.4.2 Robert

Robert is a co-teacher for primary four, where he assists in teaching English. I interviewed him twice over the course of the field work, each interview lasting about thirty-five minutes. He is a qualified primary school teacher, holding a grade three certificate and had over ten years' teaching experience from two schools. He had taught in Elgonia for less than a year. He was receiving under four hundred fifty thousand shillings per month as salary (approx. \$120) and residing in his own home about 5 kilometres away.

I, similarly, conducted an observation of Robert's English lesson. He commenced by providing me with his scheme of work and lesson plan, prior to the start of the lesson. He then proceeded by prompting the pupils to read aloud several sentences he had written on the chalkboard using audio-lingual chorus. He reinforced this with explanations in a mixture of English and *Kupsabiny*, as recommended for primary four. However, he made no attempt to involve the pupils individually.

I learnt that although Robert handles the transition from local language instruction to English, he had not received any training for local language teaching, contrary to what experts recommend (see Piper 2010). Robert explained that:

we negotiated with the class teacher of that class. That teacher requested me to assist her in English. Otherwise, I have not gone for that refresher course.

He was therefore handling a complex phase of the teaching without any formal training, which highlights the broader challenges facing local language teaching.

Like Juliet, Robert prepares some of his own teaching aids, as well as conducts additional research to reinforce content. Furthermore, I discovered that he had devised a way to ease revision for his pupils, by having them use separate notebooks for each key topic to make referencing easier.

As regards attitude, Robert is appreciative of UPE for, among others, improving his remuneration. He lauded UPE as a ‘good contract’ since it pays better than private schools. Furthermore, he commended it for simplifying the curriculum. Robert also commended the cooperation amongst Elgonia’s staff and the supportiveness of the administration, especially the head teacher. He noted that:

He has been encouraging us. You know some of us have not gone for further studies, but he has been saying several times that some people are soon retiring, so we should go for further studies, so that you will come and fill those gaps.

Robert also supports the ban on corporal punishment, although he is discouraged by the poor turn out of parents when he invites them to counsel their children.

On the other hand, he is frustrated by the inadequate infrastructure in Elgonia, which causes difficulties for teachers. Furthermore, he decried the shortage of course books, which he alleviates by preparing content on manila paper. He also criticised both automatic promotion and local language teaching. He noted that automatic promotion undermines performance because ‘when you continue pushing those children like that, it will affect them in the final exam, that is PLE’. Lastly, he was concerned about the disruptions which co-curricular and other external activities cause to teaching, which often defeats their efforts to complete the syllabus.

In regard to Robert’s professional beliefs, I found that they are mainly anchored around his aspirations to promote his pupils’ learning. For example, his opposition to automatic promotion and local language teaching could be ascribed to this. However, he also appeared to value an open learning environment. He objected to the ‘authoritarian’ way in which some policies were introduced, which has similarly been noted in other studies (see Higgins and Rwanyange 2005). Regarding local language teaching Robert observed that:

that one has been forced to be used as a medium of communication between a teacher and the young children. You are not supposed to teach in English.

Similarly, regarding the ban on corporal punishment, he noted that ‘there are some instructions they force, for example, you are not supposed to cane a child. Whenever a child is absent you are not supposed to discipline’, which highlights his objection to the approach used in introducing some policies.

The foregoing analysis of Robert’ biography reveals that he is a qualified, experienced and skilled teacher, who nevertheless, needs local language training. Furthermore, he is collegial, resourceful and concerned for his pupils’ welfare. Thus, on the basis of these attributes, we find that Robert responds to Elgonia’s challenges, thereby achieving agency. For example, due to his collegial approach he agrees to swap lessons with the primary four class teacher who had been experiencing difficulty. Furthermore, he devises an easier referencing system for his pupils due to his resourcefulness.

8.4.3 Charles

Charles is the English teacher for primary six. He is also the class teacher for primary seven, as well as the head of social studies. I interviewed him twice over the course of four months, each interview lasting over an hour. Charles holds a bachelor’s degree in education, as well as a grade five teaching diploma, which qualify him to teach in a secondary school. Furthermore, he had over fifteen years’ teaching experience from two schools, of which he had spent the last twelve in Elgonia. He was also residing in his own home and earning slightly over four hundred thousand shillings per month (approx. \$ 114).

As with the other teachers, I observed Charles’ English lesson. He commenced the lesson guided by a scheme of work and a lesson plan, which he had prepared beforehand. He commenced using the ‘question and answer’ technique, while eliciting the pupils’ responses through chorus. He later involved the pupils individually as the lesson progressed and succeeded in achieving good participation. Furthermore, he taught exclusively in English as stipulated for primary six (c.f. Ssentanda 2014).

It was evident that Charles is creatively using his skills to improve his teaching. For example, he had devised a strategy for completing the syllabus, given the frequent interruptions by co-curricular activities. He explained that:

When you find out that a term is ending, you design methods of how you can finish. One; is that you come very early for preps, cover part of the lessons, use any opportunity when your colleague is not there, you are there, to cover your topics. Late in the evening, preps, when the others are going home you try to use that time, so that you catch up.

His other strategies include summarising topics rather than giving lengthy notes and assessing progress at the end of each topic, which suggests elements of ‘teaching to the test’ (see Leat 2014; Klees 2008).

Charles researches content from several textbooks and teaches outside the syllabus when he deems a topic important for his pupils. He explained that:

We go far to teach those lessons, outside the syllabus, because we look at it as very important for the child. That is what we do. You search the books, even this P6 syllabus put certain things out which are very important for the children. So, we include that in our own, teach them, you prepare the lesson and teach them even outside the syllabus.

Similarly, he has adapted to copying content on manila paper or the chalkboard to circumvent the shortage of course books. Lastly, Charles highlighted some innovations that he is attempting to introduce in Elgonia. For example, he is lobbying for joint teaching, whereby teachers could share out the topics of a subject and teach it jointly. Furthermore, he is lobbying for storage cupboards in the classrooms to enable the teachers manage and utilise the course books better.

As far as attitude is concerned, Charles had a mixed outlook towards UPE. Although he confessed a lack of faith in it, it was clear that he appreciates its role in providing mass education. He observed that:

I now realised that the children and even the parents were now getting tuned towards the policy. Those who were hating are trying to like, to develop a positive attitude towards it. Given the fact that very many people are poor on earth here, they are looking at it as where their children will get education, because you don't use a lot of money, unlike the private institutions. According to me, it has influenced me to the extent that I am almost developing a positive attitude towards the policy. Because as an individual, I cannot do anything.

Furthermore, Charles appreciates the team spirit in Elgonia and is grateful that relations between the school's founding body and the community is improving. He also commended the cooperation of neighbouring schools, from whom he often borrows books. He explained that:

we have a school who were given this Comprehensive SST and our school has no Comprehensive. I have tried to borrow one for P6 and P7. Those ones are assisting us now here. That is how to manage scarcity. If we get some little UPE [funds], we buy.

Conversely, Charles is frustrated by the large class sizes in Elgonia and the shortage of course books. Similarly, he opposes automatic promotion and local language teaching. He described the latter as 'difficult' and 'time-wasting':

We were even almost resorting to using English to produce better pupils. Because, if it is even difficult for us to read a book in our language, it is creating difficulty for some of these teachers, now what about to teach them now. If it is becoming hard to read, what about the children now.

He noted that they aim to abandon local language teaching. Finally, he criticised the new curriculum, which he blamed for leaving out some key topics.

Pertaining to his professional beliefs, I found that they are underpinned by some key values, which include promoting the acquisition of learning, creating a conducive learning environment and rewarding the contribution of teachers. For instance, it was clear that

Charles objects to automatic promotion and local language teaching primarily as obstacles to learning. Similarly, it was evident that his criticism of the new curriculum and his initiative of teaching the topics which it has omitted, primarily arise from his goal of promoting learning. It was also evident that his belief in promoting a conducive learning environment is driven by the goal of providing essential learning inputs. Regarding the challenges in Elgonia he explained that:

One, is late releases of funds. Two, the number of teachers. We have few teachers. Then three, we have the problem of poor remuneration. ... Then number four, we have the teacher-pupil ratio. Because of lack of teachers, the children who are in a class are very many.

Finally, he lauded the contribution of teachers and acknowledged that while their welfare is improving, more remains to be done. Thus, he revealed that they had petitioned their DED in search for a solution:

We even demanded from the DEO's office there, 'why can't they arrange and call teachers, all teachers and talk to them to change their attitude, their mind'. They feel rejected, they feel they are not loved and because there are other institutions where people are going for seminars, other departments. We even look at education department as a very poor department.

The above analysis of Charles' biography therefore reveals that he is a highly qualified teacher, with wide experience and skills. He is also industrious, creative and driven by the aspiration of promoting learning. Thus, due to his attributes, for example, his high qualifications, experience and skill, we find that he achieves agency through devising his strategy for completing the syllabus in the midst of the frequent interruptions by co-curricular activities. Furthermore, due to his industriousness, he ventures to teach some topics omitted by the new curriculum which he deems important for his pupils. He also lobbies for joint teaching, as well as the installation of storage cupboards in Elgonia classrooms, due to his creativity and the desire to promote learning.

8.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I undertook an in-depth analysis of Elgonia's ecology. As in chapter seven, my goal was to elucidate the study's first, second and third research questions i.e.:

1. What are the emerging changes in the curriculum under UPE reform?
2. How are teacher responding to the curriculum changes?
3. What are the emerging features of teacher agency as manifested in their responses to curriculum reform?

By comparing Elgonia and Mirembe's ecologies, my aim was to draw more effective conclusions regarding the research questions. As in Mirembe, I found that Elgonia is characterised by structural contradictions in the form of good internal relations, coupled with less harmonious external relations. Furthermore, it is characterised by inadequate inputs such as instructional materials and infrastructure. With regard to culture, Elgonia is similarly mired in a 'problematic' status quo, underlined by its non-compliance with policies like automatic promotion and the school-age policy. This is also coupled with its failure to achieve full compliance with its school feeding policy.

Similarly, the biographies of Elgonia's teachers revealed that they are qualified, experienced and skilled teachers, who are achieving agency through responding to the contextual challenges of their school. In that regard, they are adopting similar strategies to Mirembe's teachers which involves, for example, mediating some policies and mitigating some inputs challenges. A more in-depth analysis of their achievement of agency is undertaken in the next chapter.

9 TEACHER AGENCY UNDER UPE

Schools change reforms as much as reforms change schools.

(Cuban 1998)

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I turn to analysing teacher agency under UPE using the ecological approach (Priestley et al. 2015). In my analysis, I draw on the broader findings of UPE's ecology in the supra, macro and meso layers discussed in chapters five and six, as well as my case study findings in chapters seven and eight. The analysis focuses on identifying the manifestations of teacher agency in the case studies, the factors that contribute in shaping it, as well as its effects. It is worth noting that there is a tendency to misconstrue agency as 'solely a positive capacity' (Priestley et al. 2012, p. 192; see also Emirbayer and Mische 1998). However, it is evident that teacher agency may be used for 'non-beneficial purposes' (Priestley et al. 2012, p. 192) or even to 'oppose and subvert policy' (Priestley et al. 2015, p. 27). Ball (1998, p. 127) argues that the fields of recontextualization are 'fields of contest'. Before proceeding, I therefore offer a caveat that this may reflect as a negative portrayal of the teachers in some instances, which is not my intention. In the next section, I commence with an outline of my analytical objectives.

9.2 Analytical objectives

In conducting the analysis, my key objectives are:

1. To identify the manifestations of teacher agency in the research contexts
2. To assess how the iterational, projective and practical-evaluative dimensions are contributing in shaping the teachers' agency
3. To analyse the effects of teacher agency on UPE

Based on my analytical framework which is presented in chapter four, as well as the objectives outline above, I commence my discussion of the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE with a summary of the manifestations of teacher agency identified in chapters seven and eight, followed thereafter, by a discussion of its causes and effects.

9.3 Outline of teacher agency in the case studies

The findings in chapters seven and eight highlight many significant manifestations of teacher agency in both Mirembe and Elgonia primary schools. To begin with, it is evident that the teachers of both schools are broadly achieving agency in response to their schools' contextual challenges, as well as their own biographical attributes. For example, the findings indicate that the teachers of both schools are responding in similar ways to some cross-cutting challenges such as the lack of teachers' accommodation and instructional materials, that is, through adapting to the challenges. Some of their responses, for example, copying content on manila paper have practically evolved into a UPE routine. The findings also indicate that the teachers are adopting some covert responses. This is witnessed, for example, in their mediation of automatic promotion in both schools, as well as in the Mirembe teachers' abandonment of local language teaching. Furthermore, some of their covert responses carry negative implications, for example, their violation of the ban on corporal punishment, which was evident in both schools.

In several cases, the teachers achieve agency as a group in their schools. This is witnessed, for example, in the aforementioned rejection of local language teaching by Mirembe's teachers, as well as in the Elgonia teachers' engagement of their DED. However, in some cases the teachers achieve agency as individuals. This was evidenced particularly in Elgonia, for example, in regard to Charles' lobbying for joint teaching and Juliet's monitoring of her pupils' progress using her grouping system. In some cases, the teachers adopted unique, innovative responses. This is witnessed, for example, in the decision by Mirembe's teachers to visit the surrounding community and market the benefits of their school. Finally, in the case of the school/entry-age policy the pattern in the teachers' achievement of agency changes. Here, we note that they achieve agency by not acting, rather than by acting, as seen in the other cases.

In the next sections, I analyse how the iterational, projective and practical-evaluative dimensions are contributing in shaping the teachers' agency. While the ecological framework suggests that these dimensions occur simultaneously at varying degrees of strength (Priestley et al. 2015), I have separated them in the following analysis, in order to identify their specific contributions.

9.4 Iterational dimension

The iterational dimension concerns teachers' professional and personal histories. It comprises of their knowledge, skill, attitudes, values, beliefs and is often concerned with habit (Priestley et al. 2015). It plays a significant role in the UPE teachers' achievement of agency, commencing with its ecological influences in the supra, macro and meso layers, to its manifestations in the case study schools. The teachers' mediation of the child rights policy emerged as a significant example in which it is implicated. As discussed in chapter five, Uganda was assisted in its implementation of the child rights policy by EFA under its Child Friendly Basic Education and Learning programme (CFBEL) and The Right of All Children to Education programme (TRACE) (UNICEF 2010), which culminated in the ban on corporal punishment in 2006. Notwithstanding this, UPE teachers have continued to violate the ban. For example, a government report (MoES 2015) indicates that there is still widespread use of abusive punishment, which includes caning, forcing pupils to stare at the sun, carrying big stones and pinching (see also Oonyu 2012). This violation was highlighted in both case study schools, but most especially in Elgonia, as seen in the following quote:

even if the government is saying don't punish those who are doing wrong, some are coming secretly to say you punish mine, so that he can do better because the policy says no corporal punishment. Most parents are realising that children when caned are disciplined only to perform better, not to be beaten badly. So, they have now come up with secret plans that, 'you teach mine and punish them. Those who don't want theirs to be punished, leave them aside'. [Charles, Elgonia Primary School]

The different dimensions of agency are implicated in the teachers' response to varying degrees. For example, Charles explained that the teachers' violation arises from their belief that corporal punishment may motivate the pupils to work harder. This immediate goal implicates the practical-evaluative dimension. The teachers' long-term motive of improving their pupils' achievement through this approach, in turn, implicates the projective dimension. However, their primary influence may be attributed to iterational factors for several reasons. Firstly, it may be argued that the teachers' response is primarily driven by their past experience of using corporal punishment as a disciplinary method. In addition, their inexperience of alternative disciplinary approaches, coupled with their challenges of sense-making, constitute another important factor. The comment by the CCT for Central district that teachers 'don't see these alternative measures working out' (see chapter six) highlights this challenge. Finally, the teachers' grounding both in their professional environment, as well as wider cultural environment, that until recently condoned corporal punishment, constitutes another significant factor (see UNICEF 2010). While acknowledging the intrinsic harmfulness of the teachers' response, one may therefore argue that it primarily entails the iterational dimension of agency.

9.5 Projective dimension

The projective dimension concerns teachers' ability to visualise alternative futures in their professional practice, which may relate for example to the development and welfare of students or may be more narrowly instrumental (Priestley et al. 2015). It is significantly implicated in the teachers' achievement of agency under UPE. A prime example is the teachers' mediation of automatic promotion in both Mirembe and Elgonia primary schools. As highlighted in chapter two, Uganda passed the automatic promotion policy based on the 'education efficiency' paradigm advocated by the World Bank, which is driven by economic imperatives and therefore largely ignored the contextual challenges of UPE (MoES 2008a; MoES 2015; Foster 2004 see also Ball 1998; Rizvi and Lingard 2010). The policy's enactment is thus, blamed for the declining achievement (MoES 2014a) and is proving highly contentious, as seen in chapters seven and eight. It is backed by some parents, while teachers are unanimously 'resisting' it, a response which Sannino (2010) equates with agency.

The data revealed that teachers normally invite a parent and agree with them regarding retaining a pupil in a given grade in case of poor performance. This reflects what Osborn et al. (1997) have termed ‘conspiratorial mediation’ due to its underlying aim of improving pupil achievement. The current repetition rate is estimated at 11 percent countrywide (MoES 2013; MoES 2014a; MoES 2015). The teachers’ sense-making indicates that they perceive automatic promotion as prioritising the efficient use of resources ahead of education quality. Some of the teachers’ views are highlighted in the following quotes:

government could not need children to repeat classes, because it is said that, that could be wastage of money. It had wanted to at least each child to benefit from the government's money. Therefore, we should keep on pushing them, pushing them, so that even the rest could benefit, but that one is not good, because you can send a weaker child, that at the end of the day, who is to blame. Those are the teachers. They wasted my time [David, Mirembe Primary school]

When you try to ask the child to repeat, the parent comes that, 'government is saying no repetition. Let my child go and do the exams in the next class. Let him or her try the next class'. They say, 'now she is aged' - like these young girls. When you try to explain to the parents that even if the girl is aged and has nothing, the age cannot do anything. 'Let her remain behind until she can write something'. So, the problem we have been having is that even most parents come here to fight us. They even report us to the DEO's office that our children have not been registered, most especially in P7. [Charles, Elgonia Primary School]

The teachers’ agency reflects the agentic dimensions at different levels. For example, some teachers attributed their practice of repetition to the difficulties of teaching poorly performing pupils at a higher grade, which implicates the iterational dimension. In this case, repetition may appeal to the teachers because it does not require extra effort such as improving teacher-pupil contact hours or curbing absenteeism, such as the ministry official identified (see chapter six). In that regard, the teachers’ unwillingness to adapt, or what Priestley et al (2016, p. 196) refer to as ‘following the line of least resistance’, therefore poses an obstacle to their agency.

However, the primary motive behind the teachers' mediation of the policy emerged as being their goal of enabling pupils improve before sitting the high stakes primary leaving exams (PLE) in grade 7, which reflects the projective dimension. The high attrition rate under UPE validates the teachers' motive (World Bank 2018; NAPE 2012; UWEZO Uganda 2016; Byamugisha and Ssenabulya 2005). However, it is jointly implicated with the underlying motive of 'image fabrication' (see Keddie et al. 2011; Leat 2014). Lewin (2009, p. 163) suggests that the most likely explanation for the high repetition rate in grade six 'is that pupils are kept out of the grade 7 PLE, if they are thought unlikely to do well [because] school examinations results are published and strongly influence a school's reputation'. In this regard, the projective dimension therefore constitutes the primary driver of the teachers' agency, based on these intertwining motives.

The teachers' response to local language teaching further emerged as a significant instance of agency. The data revealed that Mirembe's teachers abandoned the policy, while it is still being followed, albeit reluctantly in Elgonia. The Mirembe teachers' response constitutes a form of 'performative implementation' (Ball et al. 2012), whereby a school fabricates its response to a policy. As highlighted in chapter five, local language teaching was developed by adapting UNESCO's mother tongue teaching policy for the local curriculum (Ward et al. 2006; GOU 1992) through 'glocalisation' (Priestley 2002; Vongalis-Macrow 2007). This was aimed at accelerating learning as envisaged by UNESCO research (UNESCO 1951; UNESCO 1953; UNESCO 1961; Abadzi 2005; Ball 2010).

However, the data revealed that the teachers of both schools vehemently oppose the policy on several contextual and biographical grounds. They stated for example that it hampers the acquisition of English and thus learning, it handicaps pupils since all prep exams are set in English and it is 'difficult'. This concurs with the findings of several previous studies (Ssentanda 2014; Abiria et al. 2013; see also Penny et al. 2008; Piper 2010). On the first two grounds, which constitute realistic objections, or what Priestley et al. (2016, p. 196) refer to as 'principled reflexivity', the teachers' response is driven by practical-evaluative goals. However, in the third case, where they describe local language teaching as 'difficult', it is evident that iterational issues are at play.

The data indicates that all but two of the participant teachers were recruited prior to the launch of local language teaching in 1999, which implies that they were specifically trained to teach in English and only received the ‘short’ pre-launch training given to lower primary teachers, which many described as ‘severely inadequate’ (Altinyelken 2010a). It is therefore evident that the majority lack the in-depth grounding to effectively implement the policy, as highlighted in their sense-making challenges in chapters six, seven and eight (see World Bank 2013b; MoES 2014a; MoES 2014b; Byamugisha and Ssenabulya 2005). The CCT for Central district noted this challenge, as did several teachers, who cited their growing need to consult each other. Abiria et al. (2013) suggest that due to the lack of background training and ongoing professional development to help teachers address the diverse need of learners, they lack understanding of how to navigate the restricted oral use of a relevant local language particularly to explain complex concepts. The teachers’ challenges are further exacerbated by their bias from having studied in English (Altinyelken 2010a; 2014; unpublished; Piper 2010). The iterational dimension therefore poses an obstacle to the teachers’ agency in this case.

However, the primary motive behind Mirembe’s decision to abandon the policy may be traced to projective goals. The data indicates that the school’s enrolment had been on a sharp decline due to parents transferring their children to private schools in search of exclusive English instruction (see chapter six) (see Kisembo 2008). It is therefore evident that Mirembe abandoned the policy mainly to recoup its enrolment in line with the government and donors’ emphasis on maximising enrolment. In that regard, the projective dimension therefore constitutes the primary driver of the teachers’ agency.

The teachers’ response to the school/entry-age policy constitutes another significant example of agency. As highlighted in chapter two, the policy’s stipulation of six years for enrolment in primary one was adopted on EFA’s guidance. This was with the aim of streamlining enrolment and eradicating the wastage which results from underage and overage enrolment (CREATE 2011; MoES 2005; see also Lewin 2009). However, the data indicates that both schools have assumed an indifferent stand towards the policy. For example, Elgonia’s teachers are responding largely with indifference, preferring to leave its compliance to parents. However, it may be argued that their inertia partly stems from the government and donors’ overriding emphasis on promoting access. This is monitored

using district league tables, United Nations SDGs and overseen by district inspectorate teams (see chapters two and five) (Birdsall and Levine 2005; UNESCO 1990b; UNESCO 2000a; Ward et al. 2006). Lewin (2009, p. 151) suggests that ‘Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have generated commitments to improve ... access to education’. Such sanctions guide the teachers’ ‘pragmatic’ response, which reflects a practical-evaluative orientation. However, due to the teachers’ opting for the easy way out, or what Priestley et al (2015) refer to as ‘going with the flow’, their indifference constitutes a limitation to their agency.

Conversely, in Mirembes’s case, the teachers’ ‘indifference’ appeared to have an underlying motive. According to Aisha, the majority of Mirembe’s primary one pupils were underage, which implies that the teachers are actively enrolling new pupils regardless of their age. Their most plausible goal is clearly to improve their school’s enrolment status. Based on this long-term objective, the teachers’ response therefore primarily reflects the projective dimension of agency.

The initiative of Elgonia’s teachers in venturing to teach topics outside the new thematic curriculum constitutes another manifestation of agency. It is worth noting that Uganda adopted the thematic curriculum in 2007 based on EFA’s prompting. This was at the expense of her vocation-oriented curriculum which had been proposed by the Education Policy Review Commission 1987 (EPRC) (see chapters two and five) (GOU 1992; Altinyelken 2010b; Penny et al. 2008; Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008). The new curriculum is ‘outcomes-based’ with the stated aim of ‘fostering the rapid development of literacy, numeracy and life-skills’ (NCDC 2006), which O’Sullivan (2006, p. 33) terms a ‘cheap general academic education’, which is easier to achieve with large classes. Thus, Elgonia’s teachers complained that the new curriculum left out some topics which they consider as ‘very important for the child’, which they are now opting to teach on their own.

The different dimensions of agency are similarly implicated in this instance. For example, the teachers’ immediate or practical-evaluative motive is to provide more wholesome learning for their pupils. However, their long-term and primary motive is to ensure their pupils’ readiness for the ‘high stakes’ exams at the end of the primary cycle (see

Altinyelken 2010b; Lewin 2009), which entails the projective dimension. The teachers' action therefore primarily entails the projective dimension of agency.

The data further highlighted the agency of Elgonia's teachers, who were engaging with their DED in addressing their workplace challenges. It emerged that they had collectively petitioned their DED for a meeting to address their grievance of marginalisation (see MoES 2014a). Their action similarly invokes the triadic dimensions of agency. For example, the teachers' immediate motive was clearly to improve relations with their DED, which reflects the practical-evaluative dimension. In that quest, they draw upon the approach of lobbying, which has a long tradition amongst UPE teachers (see MoES 2014a). In addition, lobbying leverages the teachers' professional capital, which implicates the iterational dimension. However, the real goal of the teachers was to address and improve their welfare in the long-term. In that sense, their response is therefore driven primarily by the projective orientation of agency.

The resolution by Mirembe's teachers to visit the surrounding communities and 'market' the benefits of their school further emerged as an example of agency. Their initiative similarly engages the different dimensions of agency at varying levels. For example, the teachers short-term goal of improving relations with the community clearly implicates the practical-evaluative dimension. In their decision, the teachers are clearly inspired by previous experiences of engaging with the community, for example through their SMC, as well as through parents' general meetings (PGMs). In that regard, the iterational dimension is implicated. However, David explained that their ultimate objective is to sensitise the community about Mirembe in order to encourage more parents to enrol their children there. Based on this overriding long-term goal, the main driver of the teachers' agency is therefore the projective dimension.

The cooperation by Mirembe's teachers towards their founding church emerged as another example of the teachers' agency. It is underlined by their compliance with its demands to use the chapel during lesson time over lent, as well as in regard to the fee which it levies on all the pupils regardless of their faith. The triadic element of agency is similarly implicated in their response. At the outset, the teachers' cooperation is clearly aimed at minimising the church's disruptions to their day to day activities, which reflects a practical-

evaluative goal. However, the teachers' response is also informed by past experience, as the church has previously threatened to cancel their schools' access to the chapel, which in turn, entails the iterational dimension. However, the teachers' primary motive is to maintain harmony with the church in order to ensure the continuity of learning in the long-term. In that regard, the projective dimension therefore primarily characterises their response.

Apart from the preceding examples which largely involve the teachers as a group, the data also highlighted significant cases involving Charles as an individual. These include his lobbying for joint teaching, as well as the installation of storage cupboards in Elgonia classrooms. Charles's initiatives similarly highlight the interplay of the different agentic dimensions. For example, his immediate motive is clearly to resolve the teaching and storage challenges, which he has identified, which implicates the practical-evaluative dimension. However, it is Charles's high professional capital, which accrues from his high qualifications, knowledge and experience that inspire his initiative, which reflects the iterational dimension. Notwithstanding this, Charles's initiatives are primarily aspirational or future-oriented and in that respect, they primarily implicate the projective dimension of agency.

9.6 Practical-evaluative dimension

The practical-evaluative dimension concerns teachers' day-to-day navigation of the working environment. It relates to conflicting pressures in teachers' work, relationships and material aspects (Priestley et al. 2015). The data indicates that it is the most influential in the teachers' achievement of agency under UPE. This is not surprising since the teachers' biggest contextual challenges concern day to day issues such as the lack of instructional materials, inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms etc. (see Byamugisha and Ogawa 2010; Altinyelken 2010a; Penny et al 2008; Ssewamala et al. 2011; Deininger 2003). Taking instructional materials firstly, the response by Mirembe and Elgonia's teachers in addressing its challenges has been extensive. As pointed out in chapter two, government launched the instructional materials reform programme in 2000, which reviewed both its policy and management with the aim of bringing down the pupil-textbook ratio to 3:1 by 2003 (Ward et al. 2006; Penny et al. 2008). Despite this intervention, several challenges persist such as inconsistent distribution, poor storage and textbook usage (Ward

et al. 2006). However, the biggest challenge remains the lack of course books, which a recent government report puts at a ratio 4:1 (MoES 2015). The field work findings revealed that the ratios for Mirembe and Elgonia stand at 5:1 and 6:1 respectively.

In this context, the teachers are responding through ‘innovative mediation’ (Osborn et al. 1997) when faced with the lack of textbooks, or when the new ones are wanting. For example, they are reverting to the old textbooks, deriving content from their own sources, or even improvising content. Furthermore, they are responding, for example, by borrowing what they lack from neighbouring schools. They are also resorting to copying content on the chalkboard, or on manila paper, as well as sharing course books with their pupils to offset the shortages, as the following quotes from the case studies illustrate:

we just form poems, rhymes, according to our experience, so that we can combine that poem with the theme to teach the pupils. Because we don't have them. We don't have reference books, except the curriculum and the teacher's guide.
[Christine, Mirembe Primary School]

you can find that other pupils they cannot be attentive to what you are teaching them. Even the class can be not well controlled, because of using those few textbooks. Others are not seeing well, others are abusing others, others are leaning against their friends. So, you can find that even when you are teaching, even you cannot be able to see those ones who are playing. For example, you are sharing one book with your pupils. [Aisha, Mirembe Primary School]

The emerging teacher agency similarly reflects the triadic element to varying degrees. For example, the challenges force the teachers to apply their knowledge and experience critically, either in choosing among alternative textbooks, or in developing content, or delivering it, which encompasses the iterational dimension. Furthermore, the teachers adopt these initiatives due to their long-term goal of ensuring the continuity of learning, which implicates the projective dimension. However, since their primary aim is to resolve the day to day crises involving teaching materials, their initiatives are skewed towards the practical-evaluative dimension of agency.

The teachers' adaptations to the inadequate infrastructure in both schools further constitutes their achievement of agency. As noted in chapter two, the government established the school facilities grant (SFG) with EFA's support in 1999 with the aim of streamlining the construction of classrooms, teachers' accommodation and other facilities in order to meet the increased enrolment (Ward et al. 2006). However, due to the shortage of funding, the majority of UPE schools remain under-resourced and are characterised by lack of classrooms, furniture and teachers' accommodation. A recent government report puts the pupil-classroom ratio at 63:1 (MoES 2015), while the percentage of teachers provided with accommodation (mostly consisting of grass-thatched huts with mud floors) was estimated at 36 percent (MoES 2009; Byamugisha and Ssenabulya 2005).

The data revealed that Mirembe lacks a classroom for primary three, as well as a staffroom and teachers' accommodation, while Elgonia lacks teachers' accommodation, a staffroom and classrooms to enable streaming. In that context, Mirembe's teachers are delivering primary three lessons in their community chapel, commuting daily from their own homes and using their primary five classroom for staff activities when it is available. Similarly, Elgonia's teachers are responding by teaching the larger classes which have resulted from the failure to stream. They are also commuting daily from their own homes and utilising their head teachers' office as a staffroom.

The different agentic dimensions are manifested in the teachers' responses in various ways. For example, it is evident that the teachers draw the inspiration for their adaptive practices from their long experiences of dealing with the infrastructure challenges under UPE, which implicates the iterational dimension. On the other hand, they aim to ensure the continuity of learning amidst the challenging circumstances, which entails the projective dimension. However, due to their primary focus on alleviating the day to day crises resulting from the inadequate infrastructure, their response therefore primarily reflects the practical-evaluative dimension of agency.

The data further highlighted the teachers' agency in developing site-based policies (Pietarinen et al. 2016) such as 'school feeding' (World Bank 2013b; MoES 2009; Oonyu 2012). As discussed in chapters two and five, EFA partnered with the Ugandan government in raising awareness of the challenge of poor nutrition in UPE schools through programmes

like Food for Education (FFE) and The Right of All Children to Education (TRACE) (World Bank 2013a; Adelman et al. unpublished; UNICEF 2010; Acham et al. 2012). However, many parents are not yet compliant in providing school meals for their children. The data reveals that 92 percent of rural UPE pupils go without breakfast and 7 in 10 spend the day without lunch, which negatively impacts their ability to learn (World Bank 2013a; see also O'Sullivan (2006). Thus, teachers are responding by mobilising parents to fulfil their responsibility (World Bank 2013a).

While the mandate for developing such policies lies with head teachers and SMCs (Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post primary) act, 2008), it emerged that the teachers of both Mirembe and Elgonia are playing a key role in advising and reminding parents of their role. The teachers' agency reflects the triadic dimensions in the various ways. For example, it is clear that the teachers draw from their experiences of collaborating with parents, for example, under their erstwhile parents' teachers' association (PTA), as well as their SMCs, which implicates the iterational dimension. Similarly, the teachers long-term goal is clearly to improve their pupils' welfare through this initiative, which encompasses the projective dimension. However, based on their primary aim of resolving their pupils' day to day needs such as school meals, scholastic materials etc., the practical-evaluative dimension emerges as their dominant orientation.

A few cases of individual teacher agency that lean towards the practical-evaluative dimension also emerged in the data. They include, for example, Charles's approach for completing the syllabus, which involves giving additional prep using the lesson periods of absent colleagues, as well as his successful petitioning of Eastern district's DED to be returned to Elgonia, following his earlier transfer. It also includes Juliet's system of monitoring her pupils' progress using her ability-based grouping system.

It is evident that both teachers are influenced by their attributes such as qualifications, experience and skill, or professional 'repertoire', as it is referred to by Priestley et al. (2016), in adopting their respective initiatives. Furthermore, Charles is arguably inspired by the experiences of other colleagues in petitioning for his return to Elgonia. In this regard, the teachers' agency therefore reflects the iterational dimension. On the other hand, it is clear that the long-term aim of both teachers is to improve their pupils' achievement

through these initiatives, which in turn, entails the projective dimension. However, due to their primary focus on resolving the day to day challenges of teaching, the teachers' initiatives therefore primarily encompass the practical-evaluative dimension.

Ultimately, the data highlighted the increased cooperation which the teachers are adopting in response to their challenges, which some scholars have termed 'relational agency' (Lipponen and Kumpulainen 2011; Edwards 2007). For example, it emerged that informal knowledge sharing has increased as the teachers grapple with new challenges such as translating the curriculum into the local languages or explaining the meanings of local words (see Gove and Wetterberg 2011). Furthermore, it emerged that they are cooperating by swapping lessons, as I discovered between Robert and the primary four class teacher in Elgonia. They are also supporting each other by standing in or merging classes when a colleague is absent and finally, they have also established staff SACCOs from which they borrow money when in financial difficulties. The different dimensions of agency are similarly implicated in their initiatives to varying degrees. For example, the teachers' initiatives are largely habitual and draw heavily on their repertoire of knowledge and experience, which implicates the iterational dimension. Similarly, the projective dimension is reflected in their long-term goal of ensuring the continuity of learning. However, arising from the teachers' primary focus on resolving their day to day challenges through these initiatives, their agency therefore primarily entails the practical-evaluative dimension.

The foregoing analysis underscores the contentions of the ecological framework (Priestley et al. 2015) that agency is shaped by a combination of the iterational, projective and practical-evaluative dimensions, which is normally experienced as a triad. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the primary driver of teacher agency in the Ugandan case studies is the practical-evaluative dimension, mainly due to the influence of contextual factors. This includes the lack of resources which emerged as the primary driver, coupled with the challenges of policy enactment to a lesser extent. As the analysis clearly illustrates, the endemic lack of resources such as instructional materials compels the teachers to adopt a multiplicity of creative responses such as improvising content, sharing course books with pupils and borrowing textbooks from neighbouring schools. Similarly, the pervasive lack of infrastructure prompts the teachers to respond innovatively for example by improvising where to teach or to hold meetings etc. The lack of school meals and scholastic materials

for the pupils also spurs the teachers to proactively engage in mobilising and sensitising their parents. Similarly, the challenges of policy enactment such as translating the curriculum into the local languages or explaining the meanings of local words, compels the teachers to adopt practical-evaluative responses, albeit to a lesser extent. This is witnessed in their increased sharing of knowledge, as well as adoption of joint sense-making due to the new challenges.

9.7 Effects of the teachers' agency on UPE

The manifestations of teachers' agency identified in the case studies bear several implications for UPE. For example, the teachers' mediation of automatic promotion through practising repetition has been identified as detrimental to the programme. It is widely blamed for the over enrolment, particularly in primary six, which has affected the quality of teaching and learning (MoES 2014a; MoES 2014b; MoES 2015; Nakabugo et al. 2008). Lewin (2009) notes that repetition increased grade six enrolment from being 30 percent higher than grade seven in the 1990s to 90 percent higher in 2004. Similarly, the government and donors have noted that it undermines 'education efficiency' by delaying progression, which increases the unit cost of education (CREATE 2011; MoES 2008a; Foster 2004). It is estimated that repetition squanders at least 57 percent of Uganda's scarce education resources (MoES 2014a). However, the practice of automatic promotion itself is being increasingly questioned by some stakeholders in the context of the persistent lack of school inputs (see chapter six). They have pointed out that the lack of inputs undermines learning, making it impractical to practice automatic promotion (MoES 2014a; Piper 2010).

The teachers' violation of the ban on corporal punishment similarly carries negative effects. Corporal punishment constitutes a violation of the basic rights of children, thus, it undermines the goal of curbing abuse in schools and fostering a conducive learning environment (UNICEF 2010). Furthermore, it undermines the goal of universalising access since it increases pupil dropout (Oonyu 2012; see also Ssewamala et al. 2011; Lewin 2009). The failure of schools/teachers to implement the entry age policy also has mainly negative effects. It increases the wastage of resources since schools enrol underage pupils who may fail to cope with the curriculum. This exacerbates failure and dropout, in addition to being

detrimental to the well-being of the affected children (World Bank 2013b; CREATE 2011; Lewin 2009).

The teachers' abandonment of local language teaching as witnessed, for instance, in Mirembe has several implications. Firstly, it exacerbates the low confidence which some stakeholders have in the practice (Abiria et al. 2013; Piper 2010; Altinyelken 2010a). In addition, it heightens the possibility of a spiral effect among other rural schools such as Elgonia, which are currently compliant but feel disadvantaged since urban UPE schools and private schools are excluded from practising the policy (see Kitembo 2008; Ssentanda 2014).

The increased cooperation which the teachers are adopting in response to the challenges of UPE has a positive effect. Their strategies such as increased knowledge sharing, swapping lessons and supporting absent colleagues, contributes to their professional growth, as well as improves the curriculum. Similarly, the Elgonia teachers' initiative of teaching 'important' topics omitted by the new curriculum promotes curriculum development, as well as enhances their professional growth (see Altinyelken 2010b).

Pertaining to the teachers' adaptations to the lack of inputs, for example, copying course book content on manila paper or teaching in the chapel, its outcome is similarly positive. The teachers' initiatives contribute in averting potential crises which might result from these input shortages, thus ensuring the continuity of learning. Finally, the teachers' role in mobilising parents to comply with the school feeding policy is helping to strengthen the practice. This is leading to improvements both in pupil welfare, as well as in stakeholder relationships.

9.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on analysing the role of teacher agency within the case studies in order to establish its manifestations, the factors that are shaping it, as well as its effects. I applied the ecological approach to teacher agency, which disaggregates it into its iterative, projective and practical-evaluative dimensions, which are normally experienced

as a triad. I identified several cases in which the teachers were responding to contextual challenges based on their attributes, thus achieving agency.

The highest proportion of the cases primarily implicate the practical-evaluative dimension. These involved, for example, the teachers' practical attempts to mitigate resource challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and instructional materials. The projective dimension is similarly well represented. This was evidenced, for example, in the teachers' attempts to evolve strategies such as teaching topics outside the thematic curriculum, visiting the surrounding communities and cooperating with problematic stakeholders, in order to achieve long-term objectives. Finally, the iterational dimension was reflected, for example, in the teachers' violation of the ban on corporal punishment, thus perpetuating the status quo.

In terms of its effects, the results of the teachers' achievement of agency were mixed. In negative terms, it is contributing to over enrolment, resource wastage and undermining confidence in some policies. In positive terms, it is helping to avert potential crises which might arise from the lack of inputs. It is also contributing towards curriculum improvement and better stakeholder relationships.

10 CONCLUSIONS

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a summary of the findings and its implications for curriculum practices under UPE. This study explored the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE, in order to highlight its role in teachers' professional practice, analyse the ecological factors that are shaping it, as well as its effects. In conceptualising the research design, I framed it under the ontological perspective of critical realism, which guided me in developing a two-phased study design. In phase one, I interrogated the antecedent context of UPE using retroduction (Elder-Vass 2010; Edwards et al. 2014), which aimed at responding to research questions one and two i.e.:

1. What are the emerging changes in the curriculum under UPE reform?
2. How are teachers responding to the curriculum changes?

To complete the inquiry, in phase two, I adopted the ecological approach to teacher agency (Priestley et al. 2015), which addressed the research questions in the contemporary context of UPE.

10.2 Summary of findings

10.2.1 The globalisation of UPE

I conducted a retrospective analysis of UPE in order to establish the ecological changes which have occurred due to EFA's reforms. Based on secondary document analysis, I established that the globalisation of UPE was driven by EFA under a neoliberal agenda. This has involved structural and cultural reform. The structural reform has encompassed governance, access and inputs reform, while cultural reform has mainly focused on curriculum and pedagogy. The governance reform has been characterised by the use of

partnerships at the supra and macro levels, while decentralisation and performativity have been adopted at the meso and micro levels respectively.

Access reform, in turn, has focused on ‘universalisation’, which was advocated by both the ‘rights-based’, as well as human capital development perspectives. It was duly implemented and the focus has now turned to alleviating its challenges. Inputs reform has involved the adoption of a partnership approach to mobilising funds, as well as improvement in its management and use. Finally, curriculum reform has been approached strategically. On the one hand, it has focused on supporting the other reforms through enacting supporting policies, while on the other hand, it is playing a key role in promoting EFA’s preferred cultural values. Ultimately, the globalisation reforms have faced significant challenges at the different curriculum levels, including their mediation by teachers.

10.2.2 ‘First order’ changes in the contemporary context

In the field work stage, I analysed the contemporary context of UPE, drawing on the data from the macro and meso layers in order to establish its ecological changes. I discovered that some change has occurred in regard to UPE’s structure. This is manifested in the form of new dynamics at the different curriculum levels. For example, at the macro level, I established that FTI, (now called GPE) has adopted a more direct approach in funding UPE. Similarly, the meso and micro levels, have evolved and are increasingly focused on mediating the growing influence of private schools. There is also a significant improvement in the provision of inputs. However, UPE is still faced with significant shortages of inputs, hence the ‘continuing struggle with structure’. With regard to culture, there is also some evidence of change, which is mainly reflected in the partial absorption of policies. However, UPE remains characterised by the persistence of enactment challenges both in the form of a ‘dissemination gap’, as well as the continued mediation of policies by teachers. Thus, the reforms have mainly resulted in ‘first order changes’ (Priestley 2011a; Cuban 1998).

10.2.3 Teachers' responses to the changes

I analysed the field work data from the two case studies in order to establish their ecological properties, as well as the teachers' responses to them. I adopted a comparative approach in order to draw more effective conclusions. I established that their internal structural relations are good. However, this is coupled with some with external conflict with key stakeholders. Furthermore, I established that both schools lack critical inputs such as infrastructure and instructional materials. Their cultural status was also problematic. While both schools have responded well to some new policies such as the thematic curriculum, they are largely resisting other policies like automatic promotion and local language teaching.

The teachers' biographical data were largely favourable. It indicates that the teachers are essentially qualified, experienced and skilled. Furthermore, they are utilising their attributes both positively and negatively in mediating prevailing structural challenges, as well as perceived gaps in their schools' cultures. This led to the conclusion that they are achieving agency.

10.2.4 Teacher agency

I analysed the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum in the case studies. I drew on the broader findings of UPE's ecology in the supra, macro and meso layers discussed in chapters five and six, as well as in the case studies. I concluded that the teachers' agency is widely manifested and is primarily driven by the practical-evaluative dimension, followed by the projective and the iterational dimensions respectively. The practical-evaluative dimension is primarily driven by contextual factors such as the lack of inputs and the challenges of policy enactment. The projective dimension, in turn, is driven by the challenges of policy enactment, as well as structural factors such as the growth of private schooling. Finally, the iterational dimension is primarily driven by biographical factors. Furthermore, I established that the teachers' agency has significant effects on the ecologies of their schools, which are both positive and negative. I therefore concluded that it plays a significant role in their professional practice, which needs to be acknowledged in educational planning.

10.3 Recommendations

From the findings, it is evident that teacher agency plays a significant role in teachers' professional practice. Furthermore, it is caused by a combination of contextual and biographical factors, which can be disaggregated into the iterational, projective and practical-evaluative dimensions (Priestley et al. 2015). The findings further indicate that teacher agency has significant effects and as such needs to be considered in educational planning. I therefore offer the following practical recommendations:

10.3.1 Biographical factors

In their journal article 'Curriculum reform in post-1990 sub-Saharan Africa', Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008, p. 203) contend that 'teachers need to understand the underlying idea, be motivated to change practice, adapt and apply appropriate pedagogies, and have the capacity to do it', which summarises the teacher's position with regard to reform. In light of my study's findings, I therefore suggest that education authorities should make committed efforts to involve teachers in the reform process from start to finish. This will enable them to contribute, as well as enhance their ownership of reforms. Furthermore, surveys of teachers' attributes could be done to help in understanding and mediating their responses. From the data, several suggestions emerged encouraging the education authorities to collect teachers' views regarding the thematic curriculum, teachers' guide and pupils' course books to be used for their review.

Furthermore, I suggest that sufficient teacher training and mechanisms for 'sense-making' (Wallace and Priestley 2011; Pietarinen et al. 2016) accompany the launch of new policies. The study identified training and sense-making gaps with regard to policies such as the ban on corporal punishment. In addition, the training should aim at enhancing teachers' decision making and creativity through developing their professionalism, knowledge and skill. In that regard, I propose strengthening the role of head teachers as their first line trainers. The new policy which stipulates that head teachers should have a bachelor's degree should therefore be fully implemented to support this role. Finally, a simplified policy guide should be compiled and distributed to all schools/teachers.

10.3.2 Contextual factors

The study found that contextual factors such as governance, resources and policies play a core role in shaping teacher agency. It is therefore imperative that education authorities pay close attention to them. To begin with, I suggest that excessive performativity, for example the practice of publishing PLE results in the national media should be reviewed as a move towards curbing ‘teaching to the test’, as well as ‘image fabrication’ (see Keddie et al 2011; Leat 2014; Altinyelken 2010b; Lewin 2009). Furthermore, I suggest that schools’ inspection be improved to ensure that DEDs are conversant with the challenges in their districts and can therefore devise solutions to redress them. The DEDs should also be more flexible and accessible to teachers, as well as respond more empathetically to their challenges.

The lack of inputs such as instructional materials should be urgently addressed. The findings indicate that it affects teachers both directly and indirectly. For example, it makes teachers reluctant to practice automatic promotion due the poor quality of learning. Furthermore, it forces them to adopt measures like sharing course books with their pupils which affects their efficiency. It is therefore imperative that government accelerates the provision of instructional materials in order to improve the quality of learning. This will, in turn, have a positive effect on other practices.

Similarly, government should improve the availability of infrastructure such as classrooms, staffrooms and teachers’ accommodation, all of which are still inadequate. GPE noted this as a priority in their recent conference in Dakar (Global Partnership for Education 2018). The provision of staffrooms is particularly urgent in respect of teacher agency. This is because staffrooms offer a conducive environment where teachers can interact and both develop themselves, as well as the curriculum. Government should therefore take it as a matter of priority. Efforts should also be placed on improving teacher welfare in order to enhance their pride and ownership of UPE.

Due to the significant influence of UPE policies on teacher agency, I make the following suggestions which arise from the findings:

1. Government should urgently address the contentious issues around local language teaching. Firstly, it should level the playing field by ensuring that both rural UPE schools and private schools adhere to the policy. This will eradicate the incessant transfers of pupils due to parents' quest for exclusive English instruction. Furthermore, it will eliminate the habit of schools blaming their poor performance and low enrolment on local language teaching. Relatedly, government should ban the use of commercialised prep exams which are set exclusively in English. This repeatedly emerged as an argument against local language teaching. Furthermore, government should encourage UPE schools to set their own exams, which are tailored to their needs.
2. In regard to English subject teaching in lower primary, teachers should be permitted to use the local languages in explaining difficult concepts. However, the teachers and head teachers appeared uncertain as to what the policy stipulates (c.f. Abiria et al. 2013).
3. Finally, UPE's enrolment policy should be revised to ensure that parents/guardians physically accompany their children for enrolment. This will curb underage enrolment

10.4 Limitations of the study

There are some limitations which I encountered in the course of the study. The most significant was the short duration and scope of the field work, which was constrained by the limited time and resources. The study's goal of conducting an in-depth investigation of UPE's ecology would have been better achieved through an ethnographic study (c.f. Priestley et al. 2015), rather than the multiple case study approach, which the resources permitted. This is because structure e.g. relationships, culture e.g. discourses and biography e.g. teachers' beliefs (Archer 1996; Porpora 1989; Priestley et al. 2015) are immaterial entities that are best understood over time. However, the in-depth secondary document analysis, which I conducted prior to the fieldwork provided an invaluable foundation for understanding UPE's ecology and enabled me to design focused interviews guides for the field work. I was therefore able to commence fieldwork better prepared, which helped to offset its short duration and scope. Ultimately, the data which I collected proved adequate in achieving the study's goals.

Furthermore, the scarcity of literature on teacher agency proved to be a limitation from two perspectives. Firstly, theoretical literature on the ecological approach to teacher agency, which constitutes my analytical framework proved to be limited. Thus, I mainly relied on the several works of its founders Priestley and Biesta and colleagues. While, the literature is rich and deeply insightful, I was constrained in interrogating it more critically due to the lack of literature by other scholars. Secondly, the teacher agency literature focuses mainly on the Western European context, with none focused on the global south, and Uganda in particular. However, by reframing my analysis to focus on interrogating teacher agency based on its broader conceptualisation as ‘teachers’ responses to ‘gaps’ in their schools’ ecology’, I was able to identify and review a significant volume of UPE literature in which teacher agency is discussed in an untheorized way. This analysis helped in deepening my understanding of teacher agency, as well as in identifying the research gap.

10.5 Proposed areas for future research

This study attempted to elucidate the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum under UPE using a multiple case study approach involving two schools. However, due to the relatively small sample size and the brief study duration, I do not claim generalisability of the findings. My first suggestion for further research would therefore be for more studies to be conducted in related areas using bigger samples and drawing on other approaches like the ethnographic, which would help in developing a more comprehensive picture of the role of teacher agency in the reform of curriculum.

Furthermore, this study established that teacher agency under UPE has both positive and negative effects, however, the data was insufficient to establish the dominance of either dimension. I therefore propose that a comprehensive study focusing on the effects of teacher agency could be done, which would provide the answers to this question and others.

10.6 Final remarks

This thesis concluded that teacher agency is a crucial element of teachers’ professional practice, thus stakeholders need to acknowledge and consider it in their planning. It is

shaped by contextual factors, as well as teachers' biographies. The study established that teachers achieve agency in the course of playing their role as 'agents of change' through mediating 'problematic' aspects of their school environment and that their agency has real tangible effects, which are both positive and negative. With specific regard to reform under UPE, the study established that teacher agency is playing a role in the mediation of cultures such as local language teaching and automatic promotion, which is constraining their uptake. On the other hand, it is helping to mitigate structural challenges such as the lack of instructional materials and inadequate infrastructure, through the adaptations and improvisations of the teachers. This is contributing to the continuity of learning under UPE.

Endnotes

¹ Gross enrolment ratio (GER) denotes the total enrolment under UPE regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population in a given year. The official school-age group for UPE is 6 – 12 years.

² Primary school (known as elementary school in some countries) consists of seven classes (grades) i.e. primary one (P1) to primary seven (P7).

³ ‘Talking’ ‘wall’, ‘office’ or ‘compound’ refers to the use of these channels to display posters, charts or signposts that convey important information for the school community.

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APPENDIX ONE



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26 August 2015

To whom it may concern

RE: INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR TOM HENRY OGWANG

This introduces Tom Henry Ogwang as a student at the University of Stirling, UK.

Mr Ogwang is undertaking a PhD in Education, and conducting research entitled: "Teachers' adaptive responses in teaching English literacy under Universal Primary Education in Uganda and its effects on emerging curriculum practices". The purpose of his research is to investigate how teachers of English literacy in Uganda are responding to the changes brought about by Universal Primary Education (UPE).

The data collection will focus on two primary schools and related administrative channels. The study is targeting 28 participants, including teachers, head teachers, District Education Officers, Resident District Commissioners, Parent representatives, Education Standards Agency inspectors, a Ministry of Education official and a UNESCO representative.

You are kindly requested to take part in the study, which is strictly academic and guided by British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines.

Your contribution is highly valued. Should you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Priestley'.

Professor Mark Priestley
Deputy Head of School

APPENDIX TWO



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INFORMATION SHEET

Study title:

Teachers' adaptive responses in teaching English literacy under Universal Primary Education in Uganda and its effects on emerging curriculum practices

Principal investigator: Tom Henry Ogwang (Tel: 0782416310)

Supervisors: Professor Mark Priestley
Dr Ben Williamson

Course: PhD in Education

Study Information:

The study aims to investigate how teachers of English literacy in Uganda are responding to the changes brought about by Universal Primary Education (UPE). The data collection will focus on two primary schools and related administrative channels. The study is targeting 28 participants including teachers, head teachers, Centre Coordinating Tutors, District Education Officers, Resident District Commissioners, Parent representatives, a Director from the Ministry of Education and a UNESCO representative. The data will be collected using interviews, observation, focus group discussions and document analysis.

Invitation to participate in the study:

You are invited to take part in the study, however before you decide, it is important for you to understand what it will involve. Please consider the points that follow, before you sign the attached consent form. Your signature will confirm that you have accepted to participate in the study.

1. Your contribution to the research will take the form of an interview, which will be audio-recorded and transcribed (it will be typed up and anonymised).
2. The audio-recording will be kept securely and destroyed in due course.
3. The transcriptions (*excluding* names and other identifying details) will be retained by the researcher and analysed as part of the study.
4. The findings of the research will be written up as a PhD thesis. The written work may include quotations from the interviews, but individuals will never be named.
5. The findings may be published in journals and may also be used for teaching and research training.

Your contribution is immensely valuable, however, if at any point during the course of the project you wish to withdraw from the study, your decision will be respected.

Thank you for reading this.

CONSENT FORM

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. My questions have been answered satisfactorily.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without having to give an explanation.
4. I understand that any information I provide will be treated in confidence/anonymised and will not be passed on to a third party.
5. I agree to the interview being audio-taped and transcribed and its contents used for research purposes.

I confirm that I have freely agreed to participate in the research project. I have been briefed on what this involves and I agree to the use of the findings as described above.

Name (printed) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, please contact:
Professor Mark Priestley: Deputy Head, School of Education, University of Stirling, UK
(email: m.r.priestley@stir.ac.uk)

APPENDIX THREE

Interview guide

SUPRA TOPIC AREAS

Basic education: Policy vision, formulation, dissemination, support, evaluation

Supra-level questions

- i. What primary education policies have you passed for developing countries like Uganda since 1990? (Education for all, MDG2)
- ii. What is your vision for those policies?
- iii. What channels do you use for disseminating the policies?
- iv. How have the policies been received, interpreted, adapted/implemented in Uganda?
- v. How do you monitor and evaluate the dissemination of the policies?
- vi. How do you encourage/ensure compliance with the policies?
- vii. What support do you provide in the implementation of the policies (material, structural – relationship building)?
- viii. What is your evaluation of the policies' performance so far?
- ix. What has been the impact of the policies?

MACRO TOPIC AREAS

Basic education: Policy formulation, vision, dissemination, monitoring, support, evaluation

Macro level questions

- i. What primary education policies has the Ugandan government passed since 1990? (Universal Primary Education, Education Language policy, Thematic Curriculum)
- ii. How were these policies conceived?
- iii. What is your vision for the policies?
- iv. How do you disseminate the policies?
- v. How have the policies been received, interpreted, implemented?
- vi. How do you monitor and evaluate the dissemination of the policies?
- vii. How do you ensure compliance with the policies?
- viii. What support do you provide in the implementation of the policies (material & structural)?

Structural i.e. relationship building, refresher training, staff welfare, social events, building of SMCs, PTAs and other staff/parent/administration forums

- ix. What is your evaluation of the policies' performance so far?
- x. What has been the impact of the policies?

MESO TOPIC AREAS

Basic education: Policy adoption, interpretation, dissemination, monitoring, support, evaluation

SCHOOL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

School size (population) (optimum, over-enrolled or under-enrolled)

Teacher-pupil ratio & pupil-classroom ratio

Do you have sufficient teachers?

Location (rural/urban)

Distance to nearest neighbouring UPE schools

Distance to neighbouring private schools

Any known pupils from the neighbourhood who choose to attend other schools (SMC)

Denominational/non-denominational

Administrative structure/organogram (document)

Features of the school's location/catchment area (socio-economic profile of residents in the catchment area)

School's attainment history (document)

Current performance in English literacy (continuous assessment)

How performance has affected the school's enrolment

Pupil characteristics e.g. age profile, ability, gender

Details about infrastructure (donor funded? etc.)

Details about instructional materials (source, suitability, adequacy etc.)

Staff general attributes (including training towards implementation of target UPE policies)

Budget – general attributes (document)

Language of instruction status

Causes of parents' attitude towards the school

Level of implementation of target UPE policies (thematic curriculum, language of instruction policy, learner assessment policy, teacher management system, school age policy and new inspectorate system)

MESO/MICRO TOPIC AREAS

(School factors influenced by UPE)

Structure: Reporting structure, relationships; horizontal and vertical

Culture: Policies, rules, regulations, routines, ideas, beliefs

Material: Infrastructure, instructional materials

Teacher general attributes: Qualifications, skill/experience, values, socio-economic status

Meso level questions

- i. What primary education curriculum policies have you received from government since 1990?
- ii. Through what channels do you receive these policy instructions?
- iii. What process do you follow in interpreting/adapting the policies?
- iv. How/why have you interpreted these policies as such?
- v. How are you disseminating/implementing the policies?
- vi. How do you monitor and evaluate the uptake of the policies?
- vii. How do you ensure compliance with the policies?
- viii. What support do you receive/provide in the implementation of the policies (material & structural)?
- ix. What infrastructure and materials changes have you supervised under UPE?
- x. What structural changes have you supervised i.e. relationship building, refresher training, staff welfare, social events, building of SMCs, PTAs and other staff/parent/administration forums
- xi. What is your evaluation of the policies' performance so far?
- xii. What has been the impact of the policies?

Micro level questions

Demographic questions for first interview (May be cross referenced with records if accessible)

Teachers:

1. Qualification
2. Experience/skill
3. Remuneration/Socio-economic status
4. Job satisfaction

Structure questions

1. What do you understand by reporting structure (power structures)?
2. What is the reporting structure (power structure) in your school?
3. How has the reporting structure in your school changed since the introduction of UPE?
4. What are relationships like in your school, with administration/fellow staff, local community?
5. How have relationships in your school changed since the introduction of UPE?
6. What do you think about the changed reporting structure (power structure) and relationships in your school?
7. How have the changes affected you?
8. How have you responded to the changes?
9. How do you think your response has affected your work/the school in general?
10. How would you prefer the reporting structure/relationships to be?

Culture questions

1. What do you understand by policies
2. What are some current policies being applied/are dominant in your school?
3. What new policies have been received/evolved in your school due to UPE?
4. What is your understanding of each of these new policies?
5. What do you think about the new policies?
6. How is each of the new policies being disseminated/implemented in your school?
7. What changes have the policies created?
8. How have the changes affected you?
9. How have you responded to the changes?
10. How do you think your response has affected your work and the school in general?
11. How would you prefer these policies to be?

Some additional culture questions (To be used as a guide only)

- i. What role have you played in operationalising the new policies? (Class size/space management, preparation/use of teaching materials, mother tongue/multi-lingual teaching, thematic teaching, assessment frequency, refresher training)
- ii. What authority do you have in adapting the policies whilst implementing them in your classroom?
- iii. How have you adapted them to fit your classroom circumstances?
- iv. How far do you give feedback regarding any adaptations?
- v. What has been the impact of your implementation of the policies?

Material questions

1. What do you understand by infrastructure/instructional materials?
2. What is the current state of infrastructure/instructional materials in your school?
3. How has the state of infrastructure/instructional materials changed in your school since the introduction of UPE?

4. What do you think about the changes?
5. How have the changes affected you?
6. How have you responded to the changes?
7. How do you think your response has affected your work and the school in general?
8. How would you prefer the infrastructure and instructional materials in your school to be?

Questions about Nano/student attributes

1. What are some general characteristics of your pupils?
2. How have your pupil characteristics changed since the introduction of UPE?
3. What do you think about the changes?
4. How have the changes affected you?
5. How have you responded to the changes?
6. How do you think your response has affected your work and the school in general?
7. What characteristics would you prefer in the pupils in your school?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your help.