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Analysis of Universal Primary Education Policy Gap that Contribute to Pupils' Dropout in Primary Schools in Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan

OTTO JAMES ALFRED LOUM
PhD student, Faculty of Education
Southwest University, Chongqing, China
ZHANG JIAJUN
Professor, Faculty of Education
Southwest University, Chongqing, China

Abstract

    South Sudan is among the Sub Saharan African countries that implemented Universal Primary Education (UPE) program since 2006 with the main goal of providing basic education to all children of school going age. Prior to UPE, primary education was faced with the problem of high dropout and on that basis; it was the expectation of many educational stakeholders that with free education, the problem of school dropout would come to an end. Despite that, many have been disappointed as the rate of school dropout persists to date. Though in principle, factors such as socioeconomic, political and policy lead to school dropout, this study seeks analyze UPE policy written on paper and those policy put in practices and how the policy gaps contribute to school dropout. Descriptive, analytical and exploratory alongside existing secondary data on UPE policy were adopted.

    The study analysis finding reveals that, the UPE policy on papers was absolutely right and would address the education needs as a right of all children regardless of socioeconomic, physical status of learners, sex of learners and other barriers. However in practice during UPE implementation on the ground many factors still hold back learners such, hidden cost attached to UPE, school infrastructure, distances, children with special needs still enrolled in mainstream schools, sanitary and other hygiene are lacking, children in war zone are not considered and lack of policy option of successful UPE graduate from primary schools to secondary school, yet knowing primary school doesn't guaranteed its graduate job in the market this has led to massive dropout of learners form primary schools

Keywords: Universal primary school, policy, dropout, gap, Analyze, on paper, in practice, implementation, universal primary education, universalization.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter overview the brief background of the study, problem statement, the purpose of the study, the study objectives and research questions for the study, Definition of key terms used in the study and Abbreviation.

1.1 Background

UPE policy bears the slogan of "Education for All" agenda which is a global commitment made by world leaders in a conference conducted in Jomtiem,Thailand in 1990 to provide free basic education to all children and adults. While the conference acknowledged that majority of children were still out of school, it has also noted that, the significant numbers were from the most poor, vulnerable and marginalized backgrounds, which were excluded from education systems globally due to their socioeconomic situation. This particular conference was a breakthrough in the development of thought about inclusive education Singal & Miles (2010). The policy goals was to increase early childhood care and education, to provide free and compulsory education for all, to stimulate learning and life skills for young people and adults, to increase adult literacy by at least 50 percent, to attain gender equality by the year 2015, and to improve the quality of education UNESCO (2015).

The international commitment to provide Education for All was again echoed in the eight Millennium Development Goals (hereafter referred to as MDGs), which were developed by the international community Singal & Miles (2010). The MDGs are considered to be part of a comprehensive commitment that strives towards building a better world in the 21st century by aiming to reduce global poverty, promote gender equality and ensure environmental sustainability. The significance of education as a prominent tactic to reduce poverty levels globally is made clear in these international targets which aim to put an end to the cycle of exclusion from education which often leads to poverty Singal & Miles (2010). It is for this reason that the international EFA agenda is mostly focused on the second MDG, which is, "ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling", or Universal Primary Education, by 2015 Singal & Miles (2010). According to the United Nations (2015), the second goal of MDG played an important role in the education sector as it ensured access to primary education for all boys and girls. It's however, became apparent that although access to education was broadened, the increased enrollment rates of learners in primary schools were not always accompanied by quality education. The Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter referred to as SDGs) are the successor and expansion of the MDG's. It is for this reason that the second goal of the MDGs has been incorporated into goal four on education of the SDGs, which is to

ensure that there is inclusive as well as equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all UNESCO (2015)

In solidarity with the rest of the world, South Sudan government adopted and incorporated the UPE policy into South Sudan Education System in the year 2006, subsequently confirmed and included it into South Sudan interim constitution 2011 in Chapter 1 Article 29. UNESCO (2011). The policy is in form of fees abolition, and has also become popular in many sub-Saharan African countries since mid-1990's in order to achieve Education for All agenda, Singal and Miles (2010).

Nevertheless, despite its popularity and rapid expansion, and having long history of existence in Sub-Saharan Africa, existing literature indicates that previous attempts to achieve UPE in developing countries faced problems in its supply driven policies, unclear mechanisms, and declining quality of education Anon (2013). The past experiences in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya also show that UPE policy implementation was prone to be affected by economic crises Obasi (2000). For example in Malawi, fee abolition policy resulted in low levels of material provision and overall low levels of pupil achievements, Chimombo (2005).

Even with a number of existing lessons from the past, the current UPE policy is not exception of analytical study on its impact and challenges beyond school enrollment Nishimura et al. (2008).With this background, This paper seeks to analyze the gap in UPE policy that contributes to dropout of pupils from Primary school with closure look on it implementation as on paper and its practices in primary schools in South Sudan.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Although, South Sudan interim Constitution 2011 Chapter 1 Article 9, confirmed education as a right for every South Sudanese child in line with Education for All agenda, in addition, to other law of South Sudan such as; the Child Act 2008 and Education Act 2012 Clauses, made it clear that the state has an obligation to establish sufficient schools, hire enough and qualified teachers and provide quality education as stipulated in the international right instruments EMIS (2009).

Since the policy inception in 2006, the government of South Sudan has been implementing it and has increased her spending on the policy as an effort to meet the demands of primary education. With the policy introduction, the majority of South Sudanese citizens expect that the government's economic burdening provision of education was to increase as that of parents reduces proportionately. On the other hand, it was expected that both enrollment and retention would increase as the cost of education on the part of parents reduced UNICEF (2009).

The existence of high gross enrolment ratio in primary schools indicates that most or probably all school going children attend primary school at some stage but yet completion rates remain low. Thus, despite the government commitment, investment in education and the resultant increase in school enrolment, there still remains high rate of dropout between grades such that not all who enter Primary schools complete the full cycle (EMIS 2009)

The fact that UPE removed only school fees and PTA charges and left intact other costs such as: exercise books, pens, pencils, uniforms, clothing, lunch, building funds and labor for classroom construction to be met by the parents MoGEI (2016), it may explain the low levels of accessibility and retention of pupils in UPE schools. Having in mind that poverty levels in South Sudan are high, for example between 2005-2010, the poverty rate in the country stood at 65%, World Bank (2014) therefore, the issue of parents meeting these costs greatly contributes to making education costly and inaccessible to many children from low income brackets. UPE policy also seems not to put into consideration the retention strategies for the disadvantaged children like the disabled by providing special conditions that facilitate their enrollment and survival in schools MoGEI (2009).

The concern of all education stakeholders in South Sudan is the high incidence of drop out in UPE schools; as Hellen Maya the Director General of Gender, Equity and Inclusive Education from the Ministry of Education stressed in her speech; *"The issue of school dropouts, especially for the girls and irregular attendance, is a major challenge to UPE"* MoGEI (2016). Such statement implies that there must be something wrong within the UPE policy, either in its design or implementation, and yet it came with the expectations of increasing both school enrollments and retention. It is from the all above concern that in this study to investigate the possible policy gaps within UPE policy on paper and in practice that contributes to school dropouts in South Sudan.

1.3 Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze the gap in UPE policy that leads to massive dropout pupils from primary schools in Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the gap in Universal Primary Education policy on paper that contributes to pupil's dropout from Primary schools in Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan
2. To analyze the gap in Universal Primary Education policy in Practice that contributes to pupil's dropout from Primary schools in Eastern Equatoria South Sudan

1.5 Research Questions
1. What are the underlying policy gaps in the UPE policy on paper that contribute to primary school dropout in Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan?
2. What are the underlying gaps in the UPE policy in practice that contribute to primary school dropout in Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan?

1.6 Significance of this Study
This study is very important because it will remind education policy decision holders, to revisit the UPE policy document on paper, in order to realign their implementation with what they wrote on paper to achieve results in term of outcome.

The study will also enlighten community members that contributing for education is not political but based on financial empowerment of the school to improve teaching and provide proper students learning outcome as they expect from the school.

The study recommendations will also alert the government to commit to it financial obligation not mere financial pledges that end in rallies and on paper but handing money to all school to start practically doing what is on their desk as the policy requires.

1.7 Definition of the Key terms used in the Study
Access: Refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure or at least strive to ensure that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education.

Dropout: It is the phenomenon in which the student stops attending the classrooms and stays out of the educational system without receiving a school diploma.

Eastern Equatoria State: Is one of the ten states of South Sudan bordering Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia.

Equity: Means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential. Ensuring equally high outcomes for all participants in our educational system; removing the predictability of success or failures that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor.

Outcome: Is t the educational, societal, and life effects that result from students being educated

Output: Direct and immediate effects of the education process, student achievement, attitudes and skills.

Primary school: It is second basic school after kindergarten. For example in South Sudan it is from Primary one to Primary eight.

Retention (survival): Keeping pupils in school until they completed the prescribed cycle of a particular education cycle.

UPE: Is the second goal in the United Nations Millennium Development Goal which is meant to achieve Universal Primary Education, more specifically, to "ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be required to complete a full course of primary schooling." Education is vital to meeting all other Millennium.

1.8 Abbreviation use in the study CEO: County Education Officer

EMIS: Education Management Information System

GESS: Girls' Education South Sudan

GOSS: Government of South Sudan

GPE: Global Partnership for Education

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

MoEGI: Ministry of General Education and Instructions

NBS: National Bureau of Statistics

PTA: Parent Teacher's Association

RBA: Right Based Approach

UNICEF: United Nation International Children Emergency Funds

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter adopted some previous analytical framework used to scrutinize the effectiveness of UPE implementation elsewhere in the world drawing it close to South Sudan situation, it includes the following subheading, Analytical framework, Analyzing UPE policy in South Sudan according to Farrell Model (1999) and Analyzing UPE according to Right Based Approach in relation to Equality of Access, equality of survival, equality of output and equality of survival.

2.1 Analytical Framework

This study adopted the Right Based Approach (RBA) as developed by UNECSO to analyze University Primary Education policy on paper and in practice in relation to school dropout in South Sudan. Under this approach, the state has the responsibility of making education free, compulsory, affordable, child friendly, qualitative and responsive to different needs. RBA is coupled with Farrell's Model which views *"schooling as a long-term process in which children may be sorted at many different points and in several different ways (operating) as a selective social screening mechanism"* Farrell (1999).

2.1.1 Analyzing Universal Primary Education Policy in South Sudan according to Farrell Model (1999:155)

This model is preferred over others because it takes into account the internal efficiency of Universal Primary Education policy by analyzing its equality of access, survival (retention), output and outcome. It has the ability to capture the unique objectives and situation which should prevails if Universal Primary Education policy is to address the holistic needs of school outline or underlying in Right Base Approach. The above four dimensions of the Farrell examines "at what point, to what degree, and how are children of each social groups screen out or kept in schools"

a) Equality of access

This criterion assesses the probability of children from different social groups getting into the school system Farrell (1999). It examines whether the UPE policy on paper and in practice provides the access of education to all children regardless of their backgrounds (the poor, the girls, the disabled, those in the rural, in war zones and the disadvantaged). Previously, UPE policy had a realistic tendency towards universality. As noted earlier, UPE was designed with the objectives of making basic education accessible to all children of school going age but due to the Government's commitment to provide free tuition only; it was not entirely accessible to all children especially the majority poverty stricken families of South Sudan UNICEF (2009).

b) Equality of survival (Retention)

This assesses the probability of children from various social groupings staying in the school system from the time of enrollment up to Completion level Farrell (1999).In the context of South Sudan; it examines the probability of completion from primary one to eight. The fact that before UPE, education system was constrained by school dropout due to both supply (Policies, funding and institutional) and demand (Household resources, labor market opportunities, socio-cultural/religious) factors, this assesses whether UPE on paper and practice covers the leading factors that used to make children dropout out or whether it has measures in place to ensure dropping back for those who hardly survive the whole primary cycle.

c) Equality of output

This examines the probability of children from various social grouping in different places learning the same things at the same level and getting the same quality /standards of education Farrell (1999). The study uses this framework to investigate whether UPE policy in South Sudan provides to all children with the same education quality and skills regardless of their physical, socioeconomic background. With UPE in South Sudan, to ensure

affordable and quality education, it was expected that, the same quality of education grant, instructional materials and teacher's' salaries are provided to all schools whether in the rural, urban and war zones but in reality on the ground there is much variation in term of teachers deployment in rural and urban schools, for example most teachers deployed in rural areas are untrained and lowly paid due to their qualification status, the pupil's teacher's ratio, pupil's textbook ratio and classroom pupil's ratio doesn't correspond the South Sudan the child friendly minimum standards documents of South Sudan Education Cluster (2012)

d) Equality of outcome

According to Farrell, the solution lays in extending the task of the state to include not only access and survival in school but also "ensuring that all children, regardless of their social, economic, physical, biological status or origin, have an equal ability to benefit from the educational opportunity provided, in terms of what they learn and how they can use that learning in later life, particularly in the labor market" Farrell (1999). In South Sudan case, this study examines the extent to which all who survives the full primary school cycle gain access to secondary education and later access job market.

2.1.2 Right Based Approach

"The right to education in developing countries receives its inspiration and platform from the 1948 United Nations General Assembly, which adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 of the declaration states that: *"Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory"* Among other frameworks where education has been fronted as a right are; the International Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the Dakar Framework for Action adopted in 2000. In these frameworks, expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children is one important commitment made with an emphasis on girls' education as one of the overriding features. Article 28 of the (CRC) 1989 Convention on the Right of Children states *"States parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall in particular (a) make primary education compulsory and available free for all;(b) take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates"*. As a signatory of CRC in 2006, the Government of South Sudan committed itself to ensure the provision of education through Universal Primary Education. The South Sudan interim constitution 2011, Chapter 1 Article 29 established education as a right to all

and the state introduced Universal Primary Education and increased its expenditure on it as a way to meet the demands of Primary Education. Though Universal Primary Education provision is in place, what is still troubling is the problem of survival in schools as many children continue to drop out.

a) Analyzing Universal Primary Policy Education in South Sudan according to Right Based Approach (RBA)

According to Theis (2004), RBA ensures that all children receive good quality basic education. Quality education is child centered, it prepares him/her for the challenge that she or he may face in life and helps every child reach his/her full potential. Quality education is not limited to learning only but also looks at the child's health, nutritional status, wellbeing, safety and protection from abuse and violence. It concerns also with the child's daily environment on what happens to children before and after school Theis (2004). RBA recognizes children as subjects of right holders; children are entitled to demand the state to meet its obligations of respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to education of all. By law, UPE is expected to be universal, free, accessible, equity/ inclusive education, gender sensitive, supportive, nurturing, safe and healthy, effective as well as relevant and participative Theis (2004).

In the case of South Sudan, Universal Primary Education policy on paper is designed to be accessible, affordable and universal to all children. However, due to government's failure to remove costs attached to Universal Primary Education, in reality, it has turned to be a privilege for those who are above the constraining social, cultural and economic traps as well as those who can afford to pay its hidden costs. Having in mind that poverty levels in South Sudan are high, for example between 2009-2015, the poverty rate was estimated to be 65 percent by World Bank World Bank (2009), the issue of parents meeting all these costs greatly contributes to making education costly and lowers the survival of children in schools once they access education. Even though majority can still assess school, the existence of corporal punishment in school, and still 95% of the schools are either temporarily learning structure, learning in open air space and prevailing insecurity in the country still making school unfriendly to many children especially in rural areas.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is basically exploratory and is based on secondary data collected from the UPE policy documents, different reports from the Ministry of

General Education and Instructions and other relevant literature available on UPE and primary school dropout in South Sudan.

In order to assess the gaps in UPE policy, the researcher consulted and reviewed various documents such as Government policy papers, empirical studies conducted in this field, journals, internet sources and other unpublished reports.

These documents were critically reviewed and supportive evidence, contradictions and assumptions identified, that has assisted the researcher in drawing Claims, conclusion and recommendations regarding the UPE policy.

4.0 FINDING AND PRESENTATION

4.0 Introduction

This parts presents the study findings , it includes the following subheadings; In objective 1: Analysis of the gap in UPE policy on paper that contributes to pupil's dropout from primary schools in South Sudan, Analysis of UPE policy objectives according Farrell Model of access, survival, output and outcome, Analyzing Universal Primary Education intended services/packages on paper according to Farrell Model of access, survival, output and outcome, Analyzing Universal Primary Education intended services /packages on paper according to Farrell Model of access, survival, output and outcome, In objective 2: To analyze the gap in Universal Primary Education policy in Practice that contributes to pupil's dropout from Primary schools in South Sudan, Barriers to survival (retention) in the practice of Universal Primary Education policy.

4.1 Objective 1: *To analyze the gap in Universal Primary Education policy on paper that contributes to pupil's dropout from Primary schools in South Sudan.*

In the above objective, the researcher looks at the UPE policy on paper and analyses it against Farrell's model of equality of access, survival, output and outcome in the context of South Sudan in order to find out possible gaps that contribute to school dropout. The researcher argues that if there were no gaps in the UPE policy design, rampant dropout from UPE schools would have been checked as soon as the policy was implemented and provision of basic education to all children would have become a reality. With regard to this, the researcher sets out to find out the existing gaps in the policy on paper and the degree of their contributions to school dropout.

In the policy book, the main goal of UPE is to provide minimum necessary facilities and resources to enable school going age children to enter and complete the whole primary cycle GOSS (2014).

In the UPE policy book, equality of access, equity, quality and relevant education is to be provided by the Government. This content and the goal of Universal Primary Education seems narrow in that it does not guarantee equality of output as it does not show how pupils from different backgrounds and regions will be able to achieve the same level of output (learning) as well as leaving out the component of outcome by leaving out the essence of joining secondary education thereafter. In reality, this has a negative effect on Universal Primary Education implementation and in solving the problem of school dropout.

Although Universal Primary Education has a connotation of universality, its origin and objectives are linked to political motives as it was introduced in 2006, following a political commitment of 2006 by H.E Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit the President of South Sudan, that the government would meet the cost of Primary Education for all children in the family. This commitment was extended in 2010 to allow all children to access primary education EMIS (2012).

It can be mentioned that the government was not yet ready to implement the policy at such a time because there were no scholastic materials in place and all UPE stakeholders were not aware on what responsibilities to fulfill. Therefore, majority of the South Sudanese people would assume that Universal Primary Education was launched to influence the direction of the national election and Self-determination referendum which was in place that time.

4.1.1 Analyzing Universal Primary Education policy objectives according to Farrell model of access, survival (retention), output and outcome

Before analyzing the UPE policy on paper, I first look on the main objectives of Universal Primary Education as follows;

- To establish, provide and maintain quality education as the basis for promoting the necessary human resources development;
- Transforming society in a fundamental and positive way;
- Providing the minimum necessary facilities and resources to enable every child to enter and complete the whole Primary Cycle
- To make basic education accessible to all the learners and relevant to his/her needs so as to meet national goals;
- Making education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities;
- Ensuring that education is affordable by majority of South Sudanese;
- Meeting the objective of poverty and illiteracy eradication while equipping every individual with the basic skills and knowledge with

which to exploit the environment for both self and national development UNESCO (2015).

While looking at the above objectives in relation to Farrell's model, at the face value, one can say that Universal Primary Education on paper meets all the criteria of equality of access, survival, output and outcome. But taking a closer look at them reveals deep gaps that are impended in the policy design that contributes to school dropout. For example though objective (ii and vii), the policy promises to transform the society in fundamental and positive way, eradicate poverty and illiteracy as a way of ensuring equality of output and outcome respectively.

However, it does not show how this can be possible with access to primary school alone, a level that does not guarantee its graduates a job in the market. The same can be said regarding the policy inability to provide tangible guidelines on how survival is to be guaranteed as in the case of Canada where drop back is factored into their Universal Primary Education policy (Farrell 1999).

4.1.2 Analyzing UPE policy implementation strategies as planned on paper according to Farrell's model of access, survival, output and outcome

In order to achieve the set goals and objectives, it was planned that Universal Primary Education was to be funded jointly by international development partners (i.e. funding agencies, Government of South Sudan and the community) and to be implemented by the local governments.

The plan of funding Universal Primary Education as structured on paper seems problematic as it may be a contributor to failure in its implementation as depending on foreign funds which come with strings attached are likely to lead to shortages of funds in critical sectors like primary education. On the other hand, the conditions accompanying these funds are rarely in line with local needs and in most cases; they end up meeting the needs of the donors other than those of the pupils.

The community funding also seems problematic because the policy of Universal Primary Education is considered political since it was used as a campaign platform for 2010 presidential elections and Separation Referendum from North Sudan, those in the opposition side look at Universal Primary Education as a government project thereby perceiving community funding as giving support to the ruling government and retain it in power and creating disunity in Sudan.

The fact that the policy does not specify the minimum requirements for County administrators, Payam and Boma chiefs, most of them are not trained in education field and child oriented programs, to some extent, this

does not go well with delivery of Universal Primary Education programme which is likely to contribute to the school dropout.

School management committees: These are statutory organs at the school level representing the government. They give overall direction to the operation of the school, ensure that schools have development plans, approve and manage school budgets, monitor school finances, and ensure transparency in use of UPE funds with Head teachers reporting to the County Education Officers (CEOs) who work closely with the school management committee in running UPE schools. Though the criterion under which these committees are formed is not clearly, they are accountable for all money disbursed to schools and management of the school properties. Therefore, this leaves a lot of doubt to how sufficient they carry out such hard task to ensure effective Universal Primary Education implementation.

4.1.3 Analyzing UPE policy intended services/packages on paper according to Farrell's model of access, survival, output and outcome

Universal Primary Education package has five components which were meant to be provided by the Government of South Sudan through the Ministry of General Education and Instructions; they includes;

 • Infrastructure provision component which was to expand physical facilities in form of classroom, latrines and teachers' houses to accommodate increased enrollment,
 • Provision of capitation grants
 • Provision of qualified and adequate teachers for effective implementation of education programme
 • Primary school curriculum review in order to make the Universal Primary Education programme relevant to the needs of the children
 • Furthermore, Government undertook the responsibility to provide increased quantities of instructional materials like textbooks with a view to promoting quality education and equity through improved access and usage of scholastic materials.

Previously, Universal Primary Education policy had a realistic tendency towards universality. As noted earlier, it was designed with the objective of making basic education accessible to all children.

However, the policy does not make education entirely free as only school fees and PTA charges were removed leaving other costs of education such: exercise books, pens, pencils, uniforms, clothing, lunch, building funds and labor for classroom construction to be borne by the parents. Having in mind that poverty levels in South Sudan are high, for example, between 2006-2012, the poverty rate was estimated to be 65% World Bank (2017), and therefore, the issue of parents meeting these costs greatly contributes to

making education costly, inaccessible and lowers the rate of survival in schools to the poor World Bank & UNICEF (2009).

Before the introduction of Universal Primary Education, education system was constrained with the problem of school dropout due to both supply (policies, funding and institutional) and demand (household resources, labor market opportunities and socio- cultural/religious) factors. Having known this situation before and yet the policy on paper did not put into consideration the survival strategies for the disadvantaged children like the disabled by providing special facilities for them but rather left them to enroll into the mainstream school without special teachers and facilities to make them fit into the system. This problem has negatively affected the survival of these children in schools MoGEI (2016).

Universal Primary Education has intentions of making good quality education affordable to all. To achieve this, the same amount of education grant, instructional materials and teachers' salaries are provided to all schools regardless of their locations. Since Universal Primary Education policy on paper gives the same amount and treatment to all areas, it takes the whole South Sudan to be homogeneous and ignores its diversities such as rural/urban, poor/rich, girls/boy, war and non-war zones a factor that hinders equity of output which contributes to the existence of school dropout.

If Universal Primary Education policy was to ensure high survival rate in schools as well equality of outcome; free secondary education would have been included as one of its objectives. Prior to Universal Primary Education, the problem of transition from primary to secondary school was one of the reasons why many children dropped from school. By UPE not making secondary school free, this loophole still remains and contributes to dropout especially to the children of poor backgrounds who have no hope of joining secondary education due to the exorbitant fees charged.

On the hygienic front, the policy on paper appears to be gender blind in that it does not mention any strategy of providing separate facilities such toilets and changing rooms for girls. This makes the available ones to be shared between boys and girls. The implication is that, specific needs of girls especially during their menstruation periods are not adequately catered for by the policy which is another contributing factor to girls dropping out more than boys.

4.2 Objective 2: *To analyze the gap in Universal Primary Education policy in Practice that contributes to pupil's dropout from Primary schools in South Sudan*

In objective two, the researcher analyses Universal Primary Education policy in practice and explores the gaps embedded in it that contribute to school dropout. Since the main objective of Universal Primary Education is to make

education accessible to all children regardless of their background, the researcher goes ahead to assess how Universal Primary Education in practice matches Farrell's model of equality of access, survival, output and equality of outcome.

4.2.1 Barriers to survival (retention) in the practice of Universal Primary Education policy

Here the researcher look into the chances of retention and completion of the different categories of children enrolled in Universal Primary Education schools due to the necessity of resources provided or attached to Universal Primary Education that facilitate their effective learning

a) Infrastructures

Infrastructures include classrooms, latrines/toilets, water facilities as well as the school location. Although the Government of South Sudan owns the largest number of primary schools (about 95%), due to declining budgetary resources allocated to education sector, the infrastructures have remained inadequate making it difficult to guarantee equality of education access to all as well as ensuring completion rate to those who enroll Wudu, W.S. (2011).

Shortage of infrastructures and competencies to cope with large numbers of pupil is a challenge in the implementation of Universal Primary Education Vandiver, M. (2011). The South Sudan Bureau of Statistics reported 70 % schools to be classified as "non-permanent" and schooling still takes place underneath trees or outside in the field. Building and refurbishing schools to meet the requirements of the large number of learners with limited funds available remains a huge challenge. Such learning environment negatively affects children as they get overcrowded in small rooms and those who attend from outside get scorched by the sun during the dry season while in the rainy season they get wet.

Generally, children under such circumstances and especially those in the rural who get a chance to access education hardly survive till the end of the whole system. To those who survive in the system , both their output and outcomes are greatly compromised in a way that most of them can never join secondary education due to poor performance in primary leaving exams since Universal Primary Education has lowered the performance of children as well as lack of school dues at secondary level.

Clean environment leads to a sound mind, with budgetary constraints and inadequate infrastructures such as toilets and clean water in Universal Primary Education schools; one wonders whether with limited budget, schools can have adequate facilities to make conducive learning environment for the pupils. Although UPE on paper promises to provide adequate school facilities through the facility grant, the reality on the ground

shows that rapid enrolment was not matched with increase in infrastructure thus putting high pressure on the existing ones.

Besides latrines/toilets, water is necessary for maintaining equality of access, survival, output and outcome of education for all children. However, access to clean water for many schools has remained a problem in the reality of UPE, an issue that pushes children out of schools.

More so it has previously been reported that girls keep away from school especially during their monthly menstruation periods and for some ultimately never returning again to school due to lack of separate latrines and changing room. This was noted by one male teacher during the interview as follows; "*Girls and boys use the same latrines/urinals. Those who are shy keep away from school. There is need to separate boys' latrines from those of girls"*. The fact that many UPE schools lack these facilities, girls are forced to drop out of school since the society expect them to be shy, soft and them not fight for latrines with boys; a factor that makes them to dropout in higher numbers than boys Snel, M., Shordt, K. & Graaf, S. D. (2003).

For healthy learning to take place, it is recommended that schools should be in a safe reach, convenient geographical location and preferably within the neighborhood of the children (accessible). Schools should preferably be in about two kilometers so as to increase the access of education and survival rate in schools as this would permit pupils to access schools without walking long distance. Though it is evident, four kilometers is extremely long distance for the young children to walk to and from school. However, UPE policy either on paper or in practice did not put it in consideration. Therefore, the failure to establish UPE schools within the short distances increases the rate at which children dropout of schools and this problem significantly affects many children from rural areas as compared to their counterparts in urban where the means of transport is enhanced to ease the access to schools.

Although long distance to school affects all children, girls are more affected than boys because of their biological nature. Girls are naturally weak and susceptible to sexual abuse. For this reason, parents are always conscious about them because they may be sexually abused along the way by idle men. This factor makes many to parents withdraw girls from schools that are located in distant places as it was evidenced in a recent study by (Lindrio Paska, Inspector for Girl Child Education, MoGEI) as; *"the distance affects them, mostly when it rains. Sometimes they can reach school when they are tired and wet and cannot concentrate. Some if partially weak decide not to go to school because of the distance factor with a feeling that they may not make it to school. Girls on their way to school get disturbed by idle men and boys. So before they finish their journey to the school, they have already been disturbed as some do not reach school and those who do are already exhausted"* Such

statement reflects to why the survival of girls in schools is lower than that of boys in Universal Primary Education schools.

b) The costs on Universal Primary Education

Despite the fact that the implementation of UPE came with the abolition of school fees and PTA charges, many children still fail to access school while others dropout because of the hidden costs borne by parents. The World Bank (2014) survey found that 8% of households hardly had a meal a day due to poverty. At this rate, it is obvious that such family would rather spend little income they have on food rather than meeting hidden costs of education and especially the uniform which is compulsory. In cases where parent have a problem in meeting these costs, children are sent away from school until they get such money. To some extent, this causes some children to drop out of school while those who manage to go through to primary eight are likely to perform poorly due to time wasted and humiliation faced as they are always depicted as poor and unable to meet these costs.

This scenario is also found in the provision of Lunch as children from very poor families who cannot afford lunch go without lunch which by itself is humiliation enough leave alone studying on an empty stomach. This retards their physical and mental development as one boy who dropped out of primary six illustrates his situation; *"My grandmother could not afford two meals a day. I always ate food once a day at 5:00pm. I tried to stay at school for the afternoon but because of hunger, I would always sleep through the lessons. Teachers beat you for late coming, for sleeping in class, for asking for a short call. How can you explain to such a teacher that you had no supper? So I quit, I have no regrets because I can feed myself now"* EMIS (2009). Since UPE does not provide lunch in schools, this incidence happens to many children whose parents can't afford to pay or pack some snack thus compromising equality of survival on the side of poor children. Failure to provide free meals in UPE schools is blamed on the Government; since this would be a strategy to retain children in schools.

In South Sudan like in many African countries patriarchal characteristics are still strong, some parents and teachers favor boys more than girls. The reason is that many parents especially those in the rural think that girls get educated in order to know how to read, write and then be better daughters, wives and mothers, rather than equipping them with skills and knowledge that can enable them to handle their lives well as human being and progressing their career of choice. A study by UNESCO (2011) showed that married daughters are less likely than married sons to remit cash income to their parents, for such reason, in cases where parents cannot afford to meet educational costs for all children; boys are favored over the girl. This among

others remains a big concern in the practice of UPE which causes disparities in access and survival in education system for both girls and boys.

c) The provision on the Human Immune Virus (HIV) infected and affected children

UPE in practice seems unfair to orphans and HIV/AIDS infected and affected children as it does not cover them enough. Due to lack of incentives, these children are excluded from the whole system. The extent, to which they access schools and survive in them once they come to know their HIV status, is not known very well. Their participation in school might imply some additional costs and at the same time their families might be in need of some subsidies that would encourage school attendance on the part of the infected children as well as enable them cover some of their medical costs and other healthy needs. But because UPE program has not put into consideration their needs, meanwhile these children among others form a sizeable number of those who drop out of school due to factors beyond their control. Besides their ill health problems and stigmatization from their fellow children and the teachers; many of them belong to poor families, in rural areas and urban shanty towns. This factor becomes a big challenge to UPE in ensuring equality of survival for them.

d) The Instructional materials

Instructional materials include textbooks, teachers' guides, blackboards, chalk and other class facilities that are necessary to ensure good quality education. Although the Government seems to have purchased a large number of textbooks as part of UPE implementation strategy, accessing them is limited to few schools which are well equipped. Worse still, due to high enrollment rates, these books are never enough the most affected schools are known to be those in the rural and urban slums. Since insufficient number of instructional materials affects both children and teachers, many teachers get discouraged by this situation and got demotivated to teach which lead to poor quality education and in turn, children dropout as a result of poor quality of education.

e) The provision on the disabled children

One of the paramount motives in implementing Universal Primary Education in South Sudan was to make primary education accessible to all and children with disabilities were encouraged to join the mainstream schools. Though this looks a good entry point to the disabled in accessing education and especially to those who had been stigmatized before UPE, it appears that special arrangements for these children are missing Coalition of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). For example in UPE schools, children who

are visually impaired lack white canes and Braille machine paper, children who are physically handicapped lack wheelchairs, crutches and other facilities that they may need depending on their level of disability. Children who are deaf have little or no access to skilled teachers in sign language and interpreters. Further impacting problem is lack of transport due to the costly maintenance of vehicles and daily transportation of children to school.

In addition, lack of adequate knowledge and skilled teachers to handle children with traditional disabilities is a factor worthy considering as a strong case against the success of UPE in ensuring equality survival in school for these children.

f) The provision on children in war zones

Implementation of Universal Primary Education policy has had a lot of challenges in some parts of South Sudan ravaged by civil war between the Government of South Sudan and the rebels. This war did not only result into massive displacement of the entire population to camps, but seems to have been child-targeting and depriving their right of education. For example, the recent report of the abducted children amounts to about 1,500 UNICEF (2017). UPE in practice has not taken into consideration the needs of children from this part of the country as there are few schools/ classes within camps. The equality of survival in this situation has been extremely low to those who enroll and those who attempt to persist to continue the equality of output and outcome may not match their counterparts in safe areas due to moving up and down from one camp to another while saving their lives and looking for food.

g) Provision on quality of education

Under UPE, good quality of education is reflected on pupils' ability to read, write and speak English EMIS (2009). In order to improve the quality of primary education, the government has devoted some resources to procure some textbooks and construct some classrooms. The increase in education inputs explains the gradual improvement of some education quality indicators from the time UPE was introduced. Nevertheless, these improvements have not always translated into better outputs and outcomes of UPE education as evident in the results of a National Assessment of Primary Education Performance taken between 2010-2015,shows that education performance in terms of pupils' numeric, reading, science, social studies knowledge and skills have deteriorated following the introduction of UPE MoGEI (2016). Having in mind that parents have to pay for UPE costs, its poor quality makes it a sound reason for some children to dropout of schools.

h) Provision of adequate and well trained teachers

Through Universal Primary Education programme, it is the responsibility of the Government to provide adequate and well trained teachers. It should also monitor their work as well as cater for their well-being so as to motivate them for providing quality education MoGEI (2016). However the analysis on teacher's quality reveals that a large proportion of primary school teachers lack appropriate training. For example, in 2007, there were 26,703 primary schoolteachers, of whom 83% had no formal teacher training and only 17% had just a teaching certificate, obtained after training on completion of primary education. The majority of unqualified teachers are deployed in UPE rural schools. With this, one can easily see the extent to which UPE in practice does not guarantee equality of output to children in rural and other disadvantaged areas as untrained teachers are less likely to give low quality teaching, an issue that contributes to school dropout.

According to 2014 primary education assessment report made by GESS Evaluation Team, between 20% and 30% of teachers are absent from school at any given time with the main reasons for being delayed and low salaries, long distances from their homes to schools and inadequate supervision MoGEI (2016). In the same report, CARITAS found that absenteeism of teachers was highest in rural Eastern Equatoria State. As teachers dodge their work at school, pupils also dodge in response to their teacher, a factor that compromises the rate of their survival in school as most of them never come back as my ethnic Luo proverb says that; "when the cat is away, the mice plays all over", whenever teachers are absent, the pupils also skip schooling.

i) Punishments and harassment

Corporal punishments and harassment destabilize children and prevent them from completing their school. They do not lead to school dropout alone but also expose them to physical and psychological dangers. It is however sad to note that even after introduction of UPE, corporal punishments like heavy beating, digging ant hills and slashing bushes still exist which compromises equality of survival for children in schools. For instance, one of the pupils in Tirangore primary school in Torit County made an astonishing statement during an interview as follows; *"Caning especially on the back, digging a very large piece of land, denial of food at school as a punishment and sweeping a large classroom. One of the children was beaten (in) to comma last year 2013 she is not studying up to now"* MoGEI (2016). This is just a sample of the incidences in UPE schools but the story is that corporal punishments threaten many children in schools which make them run away forever and never to return in school anymore.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The study investigated the underlying gaps in Universal Primary Education policy both on paper and in practice and their contribution to school dropout in South Sudan. In this chapter, the researcher presents a brief summary on the major findings on the UPE policy gaps that contribute to school dropout with a conclusion and possible recommendations to increase both access to education and survival of children in UPE schools are drawn.

5.1 Discussion of the study findings

This study' main objective was to assess the underlying gaps in UPE policy that contribute to school dropout in South Sudan. The researcher formulated two research questions in order to meet this objective as follows: What are the underlying policy gaps in the UPE policy on paper that contributes to primary school dropout in South Sudan? What are the underlying gaps in the UPE policy in practice that contribute to primary school dropout in South Sudan? The analysis of the study is based on Right Based Approach (RBA) coupled with Farrell's model of equality of education under four facets of equality of access, survival, output and outcome.

5.1.1 Equality of Access and survival

When UPE programme started in 2006, it was seen as the main tool of achieving social, political and economic objectives in South Sudan. Its main goal was to provide basic education to all children of school age, in other words to universalize education UNESCO (2011). UPE also aims at ensuring completion of primary school cycle by all who enrolled. To achieve this, different stakeholders who include Government, local authority and school Management Committees were assigned specific responsibilities. However the Government retained the greatest role of ensuring that UPE program achieves its main goal.

Since UPE involves cost sharing, the researcher found out that this was an oversight in its design that contributes to dropout as many parents cannot afford the costs associated with UPE.

The researcher found out that in practice, UPE does not give any special consideration and support to the disadvantaged children such as: the disabled, those in war zones, the orphans and the HIV/AID infected and the poor so as to enable them complete their primary education. Due to this reason, majority of these children do not survive the full course of primary education.

Though the policy is praised for having reduced gender disparities in enrolment of boys and girls, it is realized that UPE on paper left out some key policies like back to school after pregnancy that would address the problems that make girls dropout more than boys. As a result, girls drop out in larger numbers than boys. More so, inadequate facilities such as: toilets, water, changing room, poor hygiene coupled with long distances travelled to school, sexual harassment and charges on education are the factors embedded in the practice of UPE that affect negatively girls more than boys due to their biological nature. And this illustrates the reasons behind higher numbers of girls dropping out UPE schools than boys.

5.1.2 Equality of output and outcome
Though the policy emphases good quality education in schools as a way of ensuring equality of output and outcome, many challenges and weaknesses in UPE policy on paper and practice make many children not survive the education system. The researcher therefore found that since equality of survival is not guarantee, both equality of output and outcome may not be realized at the end of the day. In most cases where children survive through the system, their performance in terms of grades, ability to read and write is of low quality due to unreliable teachers and lack of scholastic materials. This compromises the equality of output as well as outcome which cause high dropout.

5.2 Conclusion of the study
From the study findings, it can be concluded that to a greater degree, UPE program has succeeded in increasing the enrolment for both girls and boys in UPE schools. During the study, it came out that since 2006, all schools recorded high enrolment rates and majority of children of school going age both in the rural and urban were given free entry to primary education. On the other hand, due to the existing gaps in the policy both on paper and in practice, survival of those who enroll has not been encouraging as many of them have failed to complete the full primary cycle.

The researcher also found out that some of the major policy gaps that contribute to dropout in UPE schools are, lack of gender specific policies to address specific needs for girls, cost sharing which mostly affects children from poor families, , lack of specific policies for marginalized and disabled children and insufficient school facilities which emanates from insufficient funding.

5.3 Recommendations
From the findings, it is clear that the objective of UPE to universalize education was good but with existence of school dropout, it seems that at

some point something is not well addressed yet. It is for this reason that both the government and education policy makers should work towards closing the gaps that contribute to school dropout in of UPE schools in South Sudan.

At this point, the researcher puts forward the following recommendations in an effort to contribute towards improvement of UPE and to curb the current dropout in UPE schools in South Sudan. In order to reduce the burden on poor parents, the Government should consider shouldering some of UPE related costs such as providing scholastic materials like books, pens and uniforms which will in turn increase retention rate as well as the quality of education in schools. This can be achieved through sourcing for extra funds from both local and international donors. If scholastic materials are provided to all children, there is a possibility that majority of those who drop out of school due to lack of finances to buy them, they will be retained in school.

As the case of Kenya, the Government has successfully sensitized parents on the need to contribute to the education of their children. The researcher believes that if the same is done in South Sudan, the parents will learn to contribute towards providing educational needs for their children which to some degree will reduce the rate of school dropout.

In order to retain more girls in school, the government should have provision of toilets and changing rooms for girls separate from those of boys. More so, men and especially male teachers and boys should be sensitized in respecting the rights of girls and be punished thoroughly for harassing girls sexually.

The policy of drop back in schools on girls who get pregnant should be encouraged in all UPE schools so that girls come back in schools after delivering.

The Government should make efforts of constructing special units within the mainstream schools to meet the needs of children with special learning needs such as providing special grants for children with disabilities to enable them acquire special equipment to facilitate their learning.

In conclusion, though UPE has been found to have various weaknesses impeded in it, whenever it has been implemented much gain in enrollment and retention have been achieved. Therefore, all that need to be done in South Sudan is to strengthen and improve the policy so as to be able to meet its desired goals.

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