
Dissertation

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Abstract

Abstract: Over a decade since the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the initiation of Education for All (EFA), access to quality education continues to be a social justice concern for educationists and other stakeholders in Uganda. And while the Uganda government considers social justice a key objective of basic education, there is little research that examines what this means in classroom practices. Further, research on educational development in Uganda is often presented using large-scale quantitative comparative data, leaving a void of in-depth qualitative research about how teachers perceive and negotiate social justice in their classrooms. This two year critical ethnographic study fills that void by focusing on the perceptions and practices of twelve primary school educators at a girls’ school in northern Uganda, with education stakeholders in the community as a secondary source. The study employed a critical theoretical framework and relied on narrative interviews, classroom observations and documents to highlight the voices of the teachers and examine how they apply social justice. The findings indicate that rather than approach social justice through an inductive idealistic lens, participants’ perceptions of social justice were grounded in the deductive realm and they understood social justice through a realist lens using concrete experiences
of social injustices social injustices at the societal, professional and classroom level. Further, their application of social justice beliefs in their pedagogical practices was more subtle and complex, and mediated by the social and economic conditions in which they lived and worked. Conclusively, any initiatives on quality education and social justice need to address the complex nature of educational policy implementation, include teachers’ voices and consider the social and material conditions that are contextually grounded and perpetuate injustice.
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Vita

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Fields of Study

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Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................ii
Acknowledgements....................................................................................................................iv
Vita.............................................................................................................................................viii
List of Tables.................................................................................................................................xiv
List of Figures ...............................................................................................................................xv

Chapter 1: Introduction.................................................................................................................1
  Background....................................................................................................................................3
    “Bonna Basome”: UPE...........................................................................................................5
  Research Context .........................................................................................................................9
  Statement of the Problem...........................................................................................................13
  Research Questions.....................................................................................................................13
  Overall Research Methodology .................................................................................................13
  Definition of Terms.....................................................................................................................14
  Significance of the Study...........................................................................................................16
    Theoretical Contributions.........................................................................................................16
    Practical Contributions.............................................................................................................17
Assumptions of the Study ................................................................. 18  
Limitations of the Study ................................................................. 19  
Representation ............................................................................. 21  
Summary and Overview ................................................................. 21

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature ................................................. 22  
Social Justice .................................................................................. 24  
    Global and Social Justice ............................................................ 28  
    Theoretical Approaches to Social Justice .................................... 29  
Education in Uganda ..................................................................... 32  
Politics and Education in Uganda: An Intersection ...................... 34  
    Historical Development of Uganda’s Education ......................... 38  
Approaches to Quality Education in Sub Saharan Africa ............... 50  
    The Human Capital Approach to Quality Education .................. 43  
    The Human Rights Approach to Quality Education ................... 47  
    The Social Justice and Capability Approach to Quality Education 49  
Contextual Issues .......................................................................... 50  
Critical Theory .............................................................................. 53  
Summary ........................................................................................ 56

Chapter 3: Methodology ................................................................. 58  
Overview of the Methodology: Critical Ethnography ..................... 59  
Background .................................................................................... 60  
    Critical and Conventional Ethnography .................................... 62  
    Positionality .............................................................................. 63  
Research Context .......................................................................... 65  
Research Participants .................................................................... 67
Instruments for Data Collection ................................................................. 70
  Interviews ................................................................................................. 70
  Classroom Observations ................................................................. 71
  Documents ............................................................................................... 72

Procedures Used ......................................................................................... 72
  Validity ........................................................................................................ 75

Data Analysis ............................................................................................ 76

Summary ....................................................................................................... 80

Chapter 4: Findings ....................................................................................... 81

Q1: Teacher Perceptions of Social Justice ....................................................... 82

Social Justice at the Societal Level ............................................................ 85
  Poverty and Conflicts over Resources ....................................................... 85
  Experiences with Trauma and Resilience .................................................. 89
  Experiences with Dysfunctional Families .................................................. 95
  Experiences with Domestic Violence ......................................................... 96
  Vulnerability to Sexual Abuse and HIV/AIDS ................................................ 98

Social Injustice at the Professional Level ................................................... 100
  Experiences with Privilege and Powerlessness ........................................... 101
  Poor Remuneration ................................................................................. 102
  Teaching as of Survival .............................................................................. 107
  Teaching as a Last Resort ......................................................................... 108
  Underfunding to the Education Sector ....................................................... 110
  Impositions from ‘Above’ .......................................................................... 113

Social Injustices at Classroom Level .......................................................... 115
Future Research ........................................................................................................163
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................165

Appendices

Appendix A: Research Authorization ........................................................................167
Appendix B: Research Grant .....................................................................................170
Appendix C: Consent Forms ......................................................................................172
Appendix D: Government Memos ............................................................................177

References ..................................................................................................................186
List of Tables

Table 1.1. Number of out-of-school Children of Primary School Age..........................4
Table 2.1. Approaches to Quality Education in Sub Saharan Africa..........................51
Table 3.1. Application of Critical Ethnography.............................................................62
Table 3.2. Summary of Primary Participants.................................................................69
Table 3.3. Summary of Secondary Participants.............................................................70
Table 3.4. Data Sources.................................................................................................72
Table 3.5. Study Timeline.............................................................................................73
Table 3.6. Coding for Research Question 1.................................................................78
Table 3.7. Coding for Research Question 2 .................................................................79
List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Enrollments by Year and Grade in Uganda.................................8

Figure 1.2. Internally Displaced People in Uganda (April 2004)......................12

Figure 4.1. Posters at MGS..........................................................................99

Figure 4.2. Teacher integration of Social Justice............................................130
Chapter 1: Introduction

As a child who grew up in Uganda, I can testify to the power of education for social and economic mobility. I have seen it in the experiences of children of all walks of life—including those from economically challenged households who have used education as a tool to uplift themselves and their communities from the economic and social margins. That is not to suggest that education is perfect, nor is it to ignore education’s ability to privilege a few—like myself—and oppress others for who access has been denied. Neither is it to refrain from asking questions about the quality of education.

Indeed, as an educator from the so-called developing world, my educational experiences in Uganda, South Africa, and the United States learning about teaching and learning has expanded my possibilities as a multicultural educator. As a result of these experiences, my ideological orientation is that the educational cannot be divorced from the political. This orientation fuels my research into the political aspects of education, and coupled with my experience teaching in international contexts, informs my quest to ask, like Lewin (2009): What is the quality of teaching and learning taking place in our classroom? What can we do about it?
The educational-political unified approach is a key concept in multicultural education and a central tenet of social justice (pedagogy) where processes that oppress some and privilege others are interrogated, challenged and acted upon with the aim of effecting social change. To this end, the government of Uganda introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program in 1997 with the aim of promoting equal access for children from marginalized families and “promote social justice” (Government of Uganda, 1993). And while access has been achieved to a great extent, the quality of education standards has continued to plummet.

There is a strong bond that exists between my biography and the research context. My background, as well as the rapport I created with my participants has privileged me with unique vantage points to understand the nuances beyond surface value. While filling a void created by the dearth of African researchers doing research on and about Africa in the academy, I make no illusions of the responsibility that comes with carrying out research about my people. I bring with me what Kenyan scholar, Njoki Wane (2008) contends comes from an African local, cultural and political context and based on “a living experience that is informed by ancestral voices” (p.183).

This research study on social justice and quality education is based on a region navigating post conflict reconciliation and reconstruction after over two decades of violent conflict. This dissertation uses a critical theoretical framework to examine how teachers perceive social justice and how they integrate it as a government policy in their everyday pedagogical classroom practices.
Background

The Education For All (EFA) movement was launched in 1990 under the auspices of UNESCO, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNFPA, UNICEF and World Bank. Inspired by the ideological principal that educational inequities are a global justice issue (Fraser, 2006; Tikly & Dachi, 2009), the EFA became a global movement to universalize basic education for all children, youth and adults and to massively reduce illiteracy by 2000. In 2000, the international community met again in Dakar, Senegal to reflect on the progress and generate impetus towards achieving the aims of the EFA. Aligning the goals of the EFA to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education, the international community reiterated their commitment to achieving EFA by 2015. A key development of the EFA was the mandate given to UNESCO to be the lead coordination agency of the EFA with governments, development agencies, governments, civil society organizations, non-government organizations and media as partners (Lewin, 2009; UNESCO, 2012).

As the EFA approaches a decade and a half since initiation, this study examines how educators in a northern Uganda school navigate the challenges they face in providing quality education with a social justice pedagogical approach. The 6 EFA goals include: expansion of early childhood education, achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE), promoting learning for youth and adults, halving illiteracy levels, achieving gender parity and improving the quality of education. While this study focuses on the quality of education, the interwoven and overlapping nature of the goals necessitates a holistic approach.
As part of the framework, governments and non-government actors undertook to implement the EFA initiatives to improve educational opportunities for the world’s poorest and underserved populations. The degree of commitment and implementation has varied from country to country as has the gains registered. According to the 2005 EFA Index, 35 countries are still far from achieving the EFA goals. Of these countries, all but 3 are from Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2005). Figure 1 (UNESCO, 2012) shows the significant disproportionality in numbers.

Further, the EFA Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2012) has projected that the overall targets of the EFA will be missed by a large margin. The critical indicators of primary school enrolment and attrition include social economic status, gender, disability, civil conflict and rural-urban residential dynamics (Dawson, Hollins, Mukongolwa & Witchalls, 2003; Lewin, 2011; Moyi, 2010; Ohba & Access, Equity and Transitions in Low Income Countries, 2011; UNICEF, 2010).

Table 1.1. Number of out of school children of primary school age, 1999-2010 (Source: UNESCO, 2012)
In a study of 6 Sub Saharan countries including Uganda that relied on Demographic Health Surveys, Lewin and Sabates (2012) found that differences in access is associated with residence (rural, urban), gender (male, female) are smaller in comparison with those in household wealth. These findings are consistent with those from a similar study in Nigeria (Kazeem, Jensen & Stokes, 2010), which found that the critical factors have the most impact when they intersect with household wealth. It is therefore inferred that socio-economic status has the most impact in determining access to quality education, performance, completion and transition rates (Lewin, 2011).

Bonna Basome: The genesis of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda

To talk about Uganda’s free primary education scheme without placing it in the historical context of educational development and globalization would only tell half the story. After all, post-independence governments in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania made expansion of educational opportunities a central focus of national development (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007). However, the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies, especially Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) that sought to adjust and revitalize African economies using market-driven approaches (Galabwa, 2001; Mamdani, 2007; Mukudi, 2004; Samoff & UNICEF, 1994; Vavrus, 2006), negatively impacted these initial gains. In the quest to reduce government expenditure, cost sharing was introduced in education. The consequences were especially catastrophic for children from poor households who could not afford to bear the extra burdens and had to drop out. It was only in the mid-nineties when primary enrollment rates began to increase with the
new initiatives to achieve the Education For All (Government of Uganda, 1993; Ministry
of Education & Sports, 1999; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007).

Uganda introduced the Universal Primary Education (popularly known in political
parlance as “Bonna Basome”, loosely translated as “Let them all go to school”) in 1997
following a presidential campaign pledge in the 1996 presidential elections. Under the
scheme, school fees were abolished for children from poor families and government
expenditure on primary education was increased to cover a rapid expansion of primary
schools in the country. The UPE was galvanized by the EFA impetus, but it was also a
result of broader reforms recommended by the 1987 Education Review Commission
Report adopted by the Government in its 1993 White Paper on Education (Essama-
was placed at the center of national development in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan,
the 2010-2015 National Development Plan as well as the 2040 National Development
Plan (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2010). However, as
Oketch and Rolleston (2007) suggest, the introduction of UPE in Uganda was not a result
of a calculated, well-planned policy implementation. Rather, it was driven as a result of
the need to score political capital due to the new post-cold war competitive multiparty
political dispensation that swept the continent in the late eighties and early nineties
(Stasavage, 2005) and pursued primarily because of its “interest convergence” effect
(Ladson-Billings, 200, p.38). In other words, it was implemented because the ruling elite
had political capital to gain from it, not necessarily because of its noble goals.
Predictably, this argument continues to elicit intense debate within Uganda’s political
discourse. Which side of the debate is right depends on inferential and contextual factors. What is clear, however, is that the goals articulated by the government mirror those of the EFA and conform to the neoliberal economic paradigm that links education and literacy to human capital and national development (Ministry of Finance & Planning and Economic Development, 2012; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007). This latter point encapsulates the local-global dynamics of educational policy and situates Uganda’s UPE within the global social justice movement against illiteracy and poverty.

Studies show that free primary education has had mixed results in Uganda. Enrollment figures have rose rapidly and gender gaps were bridged, at least at primary school levels. Between policy announcement in 1996 and 1999, Uganda’s primary school enrollment rate rose from 57 percent in 1996 to 90 percent in 1999 (Ministry of Education & Sports, 1999; Nishimura, Yamano, Sasaoka, 2008). Figure 1 shows a rapid increase in enrollment beginning with the 1997 cohort. Uganda’s initially successful attempts at expanding access to education became a success story; however, this has stalled since 2009 with comparatively high attrition levels. Results show that due to high attrition rates, Uganda is still far from achieving the Millennium Development Goals targets and is lagging behind its peers in the region (Lewin & Little, 2011; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007; UNESCO, 2012).
A recently released report, *Are our children learning? Annual Learning Assessment Report 2010* released by the National NGO-Forum (Uwezo, 2010) found that in all 27 districts surveyed, 15% of all Grade 7 pupils sampled could not solve a numerical division problems of Grade 2 level of difficulty. 28% were unable to read and comprehend a story of Grade 2 level of difficulty. Furthermore, there were no differences with regard to mathematical competencies for both private and government schools. Although the report shifts the focus to what and whether students are learning in the schools, it does not situate the inequities observed in the classroom within the wider societal issues, nor does it provide detail that helps us understand how teachers teach and learn. As such, it implicitly employs an input-output approach to teaching and learning (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

Although enrollment numbers have increased significantly, educational standards have declined. Research data on educational standards under the EFA indicates that,
although the Primary Enrollment Rates (PER) has increased, at least in some countries such as Uganda, access to quality education has continued to be a challenge for the country’s poor (Eilor, 2004; Deininger, 2003; Lewin, 2012; Ssekamwa & Lugumbya, 2001; UNESCO, 2012). As one of the 35 countries still struggling to achieve the EFA targets on educational quality, a study on Uganda is relevant.

Scholars in the comparative and international education movement suggest that there is a connection between the global initiatives and policies and that of developing countries who are recipients of donor assistance (Samoff & UNICEF, 1994; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). One result of these dynamics is the transplantation- or transpolination- of policies such as free education from the global north to the south. Situating the Universal Primary Education in the global movement for social justice, my research goal was to understand how these initiatives are reassembled and reconstituted by schools and teachers in their pedagogical practices to suit the local social and material context. In doing so, this study implicitly touched on the “politics of schooling” (Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Vavrus 2009) in the quest to understand how social justice education is manifested, how it is mediated by teachers’ epistemological diversity and the social and material conditions in which they live and work (Vavrus, 2009).

Further, although there is a plethora of research that examine access to quality education using large statistical data and demographic health surveys (see Lewin & Sabates, 2012; Moyi, 2012), the analyses of education with a focus on breadth often ignore the “social conditions of learning” (Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Vavrus, 2009). Vavrus (2009) posits for more qualitative research studies that focus on teachers’ beliefs,
but also examine pedagogy from an in-depth ethnographic perspective in order to capture the lived experiences and nuances. This ethnographic study filled this gap by using “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) grounded in personal narratives of educators at MGS that were triangulated with classroom observations and documents.

Research Context

This critical ethnographic study was conducted in a region that is negotiating post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation because it was the epicenter of the insurgency in northern Uganda (Cheney, 2005; Behrend, 1998; Human Rights Watch, 2003a; Soto, 2009). Mission Girls’ School (a pseudonym) is a girls’ day and boarding school founded in the 1930s by catholic missionaries. According to the school profile, its founders aimed to promote equity by providing educational opportunities for girls low from and middle class families and liberate them from perceived cultural biases that confounded women to the private sphere. Mission Girls’ is located in the outskirts of a major town. The school is funded by the central government administered in conjunction with the founding body. It has a fluid student population of approximately eight hundred and fifty girls (School records, 2013) and an average of one hundred and fifty truants in a day based on the daily census register at the front office.

Mission Girls’ was chosen using community nomination (Ladson-Billings, 1995) due to its central position as a girls’ school in northern Uganda, a historically marginalized region of Uganda negotiating post conflict reconciliation and reconstruction. With roots in the historical marginalization of the region (Karugire, 1980 Mamdani, 1996; Mutibwa, 1992), the impact of the two-decade war on security of persons and property as well as the
social (infra)structure was so devastating that Jan Egeland the UNICEF Chief described as “the biggest forgotten and neglected humanitarian emergency in the world” (World Vision, 2000). Others have used the term “cultural genocide” to describe the catastrophic impacts of this violent conflict on communities in the Lango and Acholi sub-regions of northern Uganda (Soto, 2009).

An estimated 1.6 million people were forced into urban-based displacement camps and forced to seek shelter with poor sanitary conditions (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women & Children, 2005), exacerbating poverty levels (Bird, Higgins & McKay, 2004) and affecting the security situation in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. Figure 1.2 shows that of all the affected areas, Gulu had the largest numbers of displaced persons in the region during the war. As is common in other such contexts, children and women were most affected (Behrend, 1998; Human Rights Watch, 2003b; Wessells, 2005), with an estimated 30,000 children (making up over 75% of the LRA combatants) experiencing forced abduction, and many returning with memories of war and day-to-day suffering (Cheney, 2005).
Although Mission Girls' was the primary site, a holistic understanding of the phenomenon necessitated a multi-site approach. To this end, I also visited non-government organizations, community leaders and district officials to transcribe the data and find patterns and contradictions (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).
Statement of the Problem

Whereas the introduction of Universal Primary Education, a key initiative of the EFA has led to increased access to primary education in Uganda, there has also been a decline in quality which is exacerbated by high teacher-student ratios, inadequate learning resources, funding gaps, as well as high attrition rates (Eilor, 2004; Lewin, 2009). In addition, assessment tests in literacy and numeracy show that students in Uganda are lagging behind their peers in the region with regard to grade level literacy and numeracy (Uwezo, 2010). Yet, the government of Uganda lists social justice as a key objective of basic education (Government of Uganda, 1993).

While there is an increasing body of literature on social justice education (Tyson, 2002; Tyson & Park, 2006; Gutstein & Peterson, 2005; Darling-Hammond, French & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; North, 2006), few researchers have focused on how teachers perceive social justice and how their perceptions of social justice relates to their pedagogical practices (Park, 2008). Further, although social justice has become a key feature of “traveling policies” embedded in the initiatives to expand education globally-including Uganda- few studies have focused on social justice education in non-western contexts.

Based on prior literature (Fraser, 1997/2009; Lewin, 2009; North, 2008; Rizvi & Engel, 2009; Tikly & Dachi, 2009; Tyson & Park, 2006 UNESCO, 2012;), this research study was premised on three propositions: 1) that primary education is a social justice issue in Uganda, 2) teacher’s perceptions and epistemological diversity with regards to social justice and social justice pedagogy matters, and 3) social justice and education
need to go beyond the current focus on access to focus on the quality of education.

Research Questions

To investigate how social justice is perceived and appropriated by my participants in their pedagogical practices, the research questions were:

1. How do educators perceive social justice pedagogy?
2. How do educators apply social justice in their classroom pedagogical practices in the quest to provide quality education?

Overall Research Methodology

This critical ethnographic research study employed a critical theoretical framework (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993; Tyson, 1999). Critical theory assumes that thought is mediated by socially and historically constituted power and perceives the world through the lens of subjugation and domination (Gibson, 1986). Kincheloe and McLaren posit that critical ethnography is the most suitable methodology for critical theory because it employs critical theory both as a theory and as a “mode of interpretation” (Murillo, 2004, in Madison, 2005). The critical ethnographic approach was appropriate because of my three months of observations, interviews and two years of continued communication with my subjects, my long sustained living and professional experiences growing up and working in Uganda, and my deep involvement in the community.

Data collection involved two and a half years of sustained research on the ground and communicating with participants remotely. I relied on three main data collection methods: narrative interviews (Conelly & Clandinin, 2006; Czarniawska, 2004), field
observations (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995; Nespor, 2006) and content analysis. For reliability, I triangulated data collection methods and the sources by conducting with selected students, community members, teacher trainers, district educational officials, and officials from education-focused non-government organizations operating in the area.

Definition of terms

Social justice has multiple camps and perspectives, with multiple complex ideologies, ambiguities and implications for teaching content. Iris Young defines social justice through the lens of social equality. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Young defines social justice as “the distribution of social goods...[and] the full participation and inclusion of everyone in a society’s major institutions, and the socially supported substantive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realize their choices.” (p. 173). Although the redistribution of material goods is a key feature of social justice, Young over-emphasizes the economic aspects at the expense of political representation and cultural recognition of marginalized groups and individuals (Fraser, 2006).

I defined social justice as a philosophical standpoint that emphasizes recognizing and changing inequitable societal structures that unjustly propagate and maintain the subjugation of some groups while privileging others, and seeks to bring about societal change through social action (Bennett, 2011). As well as connecting social justice with care for the planet and clearing of myths, it is also a continuous process that is never complete.
Drawing from Tyson & Park (2006), I will defined teaching for social justice as a process, a style and a pedagogical stance that aims for “lifting the veil of ignorance” about issues of injustice in their everyday lived experiences to use their agency to challenge and transform their lives. Teaching for social justice privileges both content and social activism, entails helping students make inter-textual connections by locating themselves in the texts and ‘knowledge’, as well as to look out for, and critique the gaps between the knowledge and their lived experiences. As a catalyst for social change, teaching for social justice draws heavily on critical theory. It enables students to appreciate “multiple perspectives, respect for cultural differences, understanding that people must not be discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, religion, sexuality, political affiliations, age, disability, location, social background or group membership” (p.25).

I used the terms teaching for social justice and social justice pedagogy interchangeably on the assumptions that although they are disparate, they overlap. And although the manifestations of race(ism) was not as central in my context compared to Tyson & Park’s (2006) America, their definition was an appropriate starting point from which to understand how my subjects’ perceptions and integration of social justice (pedagogy) were similar or different.

Significance of the Study

This study investigates an area that is needs more research. Although social justice research in education is increasing in the global west (see, Joseph, 2013; Tyson & Park, 2008; Gutstein & Peterson, 2005; Darling-Hammond, French & Garcia-Lopez,
few studies on social justice focus on non-western contexts, specifically on Uganda. And yet, the government of Uganda (1993) has made social justice a key objective of basic education and a mission under its Universal Primary Education (UPE) program. As such, this study is has theoretical and practical implications to the field of education generally, and social justice education specifically.

Theoretical Contributions
Theoretically, I used a critical social justice approach to account for my participants’ ontological understandings and epistemological orientations to social justice. Social justice is informed by western ideals of justice, but it is not a priori concept nor is its understanding and application universal. Rather, it is a dialectical concept grounded its relation to what is perceived to be socially unjust (Park, 2008).

Research informed by critical theory recognizes that injustices are rooted in society and are mediated capitalist assumptions of production and consumption which seek to privilege some, oppress others and doll out penalties to coerce subordinates to accept their marginalized status as deserved, natural or necessary (Kinchloe & McLaren, 1989). Moreover, I deconstruct the oppressive nature of educational discourse, but I also go beyond the “what is” to the “what if” by methodologically working collaboratively with participants to reconstruct a socially just world.

This research study will broaden the notion of social justice and how it is appropriated in initiatives for quality education. While most studies on social justice in the third world approach social justice more structurally basing on macro data (Rizvi & Engles, 2009), this study is anchored in new academic discourses (see, for example,
Alexander, 2009) that critique the school efficiency model’s preoccupation with numbers (at the expense of pedagogy) as measures of quality and foregrounded by a recent emphasis of pedagogy as the “cornerstone” for quality education and student academic outcomes (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012).

Practical Contributions

This study has policy implications. In this era of global justice, educational policies from the global north are transferred as ready-made solutions to correct social injustices in developing countries. For Uganda, social justice is one such policy that was entrenched within the national education plan to expand access to primary education. And while these solutions are evident in policy manuals, their implementation is often more complex and ubiquitous (Samoff & UNICEF, 1994). This study contributes to the knowledge of how these policies are negotiated, adapted and appropriated to suit the social and material conditions in the quest to provide quality education (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). The social and material conditions include inadequate funding, low teacher morale, over-crowded classrooms, lack of learning resources and over-reliance on summative test scores as assessment of student learning.

Pedagogically, this study contributes to knowledge on social justice by examining how teachers’ grounding in epistemologically diverse beliefs on teaching, learning and social justice informs their pedagogical practices for social justice. Teachers’ understanding of social justice was informed by their experiential knowledge of injustices based on two decades of conflict. However, their pedagogical practices for social justice were tempered by the significantly challenging social and material conditions in which...
they worked and the pressure placed on them to prepare students to pass examinations. Although teachers brought their experiential knowledge of social injustice to the classroom, often, this was not integrated with the content.

Lastly, this research study has implications for policy and practice. It sought to understand how teachers negotiate, resist and survive through government policies in their quest to provide quality primary education. Although government policies were aligned to prescriptive policy requirements required by donor partners that required child-centered and child-friendly approaches to learning, often the implementation of these policies was more complex and nuanced, and negotiated by the prevailing social and material conditions (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012), and heavily informed by the demands for high stakes testing.

Assumptions of the Study

“Qualitative research requires transparency about assumptions”

Following Glesne, this study was premised on three major assumptions. First, access to quality primary education in developing countries facing austerity measures is a social justice issue (Samoff & UNICEF, 1994), and especially so for students and teachers of Mission Girls School who are negotiating post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction after over two decades of civil war. Framing it as such captures its enormity and situates it in the global, societal and local back-and-forth, but also makes a clarion call for concerted and grounded action while being open to contradictory interpretations based on the socio-cultural context (Tikly & Dachi, 2009). Secondly,
social justice needs to extend beyond access to education. Specifically, it also necessitates an evaluation of what is being taught (curriculum), and how it is being taught (pedagogy) (Lewin, 2011). Lastly, although there is a transplantation of educational policies from the western countries to developing countries receiving development aid, often, these policies are re-assembled and adapted to suit the epistemological diversity of teachers and the social and material conditions in which they teach and learn (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012).

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are inherent in the qualitative research approach (Glesne, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). The participants in this case study are not representative of all Ugandan teachers or of residents of northern Uganda. And while Mission Girls’ School may bear similarities with schools in the country, this by no means makes my findings generalizable to all.

Due to my situationality in a teacher-education institution in the United States of America and my positionality as a Ugandan doctoral student having to travel back home, the processes of nominating communities and participants as well as conducting member checks were deliberately time and context dependent. While my situated-ness as a “halfie researcher” studying about my people may be a source of bias, I have benefitted from insider-outsider perspectives of social justice in American and Ugandan schools (Subedi, 2006/2011). My unique positionality provided me with anecdotal and experiential insights that enable me to capture the nuances that others would miss.
Re-presentation

I continuously reflected on the power embodied in myself as the researcher and my researcher-role oscillated between being the transmitter and interpreter, the presenter, re-presenter of the lives and stories of participants who gave me their consent to reveal their stories as well as an activist for social justice (Fine, 1994). My research questions, theoretical framework, data collection and analysis were guided by Soyini Madison’s (2005) key questions:

- “How do we reflect upon and evaluate our own purpose, intentions and frames of analysis as researchers?
- How do we predict consequences or evaluate our own potential to do harm?
- How do we create and maintain a dialogue of collaboration in our research projects between ourselves and others?
- How is the specificity of the local story relevant to the broader meanings and operations of the human condition?
- How—in what location or through what intervention—will our work make the greatest contribution to equity, freedom and justice?” (p.5)
- “How can I be an effective advocate without compromising my intellectual integrity and critical objectivity?
- How do I represent complex problems without negatively misrepresenting the subjects of the study?
- How can I prevent my voice, as a researcher, from overpowering the voices of the subjects themselves?” (p.131)

Continuously reflecting on these questions helped me to frame the study, stay true to the epistemological orientations of critical theory and ground the study in critical theory and social justice. In chapter 3, I elaborate these affordances in more detail.

Summary and Overview of the Dissertation

In this chapter, I have introduced the study and defined the major concepts. While social justice is one of the key policy objectives of basic education in Uganda (Government of Uganda, 1993), studies have not examined what this means in
pedagogical practices of teachers. This study seeks to fill that void while contributing to social change, as will be discussed in chapter 3.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on social justice and the debates within the field of primary educational development in Africa. Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology and lays out the procedures involved in carrying out this critical ethnographic research. Chapter 4 lays out the findings of the study. What follows in Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings and implications for policy.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews the literature on social justice employs a critical theory as a framework for this study. Below, I introduce the study; explore the literature on social justice and education in Uganda. This is followed by an exploration of literature on quality education. Then, I examine globalization and the educational dynamics in Uganda. What follows is an introduction of the critical theoretical framework of analysis and its application to this study. I end with a conclusion and summary of the chapter.

The expansion of education remains a key development strategy for development in most developing countries. Yet, over a decade after the initiation of the Education for All (EFA) movement for education, access to quality education continues to be a challenge for many. The UNESCO EFA Monitoring Report lists Uganda among the 37 countries struggling to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and EFA targets, with all but 2 countries based in Sub Saharan Africa.

Free primary education has been widely embraced by many developing countries as a means to promote equity, enhance economic productivity and enhance human capacity for national development (Lewin, 2011; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007; UNESCO,
The EFA placed education and training at the center of national development and focused on complex and overlapping targets including the expansion of early childhood education, achieving universal primary education, promoting learning for youth and adults, halving illiteracy, achieving gender parity, and improving the quality of education (UNESCO, 2012). It was expected that free primary education would benefit the poor and make educational opportunities available to them, thereby reducing illiteracy rates (Lewin & Sabates, 2012; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007).

Uganda’s Universal Primary Education (UPE) is a poignant example of the EFA policy for education expansion. Launched in 1997, it was expected to be the solution to Uganda’s educational challenges. And while there was a resultant rapid increase in education enrollment rates and Uganda became a success story, these achievements have stagnated since 2009, with high attrition rates among students and teachers (Government of Uganda, 1993; Higgins & Rwanyange, 2005; UNESCO, 2010). UNESCO (2010) places Uganda’s primary completion rates at 50% while a World Bank study (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012) concludes that although access to primary education increased significantly between 1999-2009, many countries in the region are still off track on achieving universal primary completion rates (PCR), with one third of children of school going age still out of school.

To this end, the Ugandan government lists social justice as a key objective of basic education (Government of Uganda, 1993), and so the declining quality of primary education necessitates an investigation of what this means in practice. Several studies have captured the statistical data on factors that impact access to quality education.
(Lewin, 2011; Majgaard & Mingat, 2012; Moyi, 2010; Ohba & Access, Equity and Transitions in Low Income Countries, 2011; UNICEF, 2010). However, few have employed a cultural-ethnographic perspective to examine teaching and learning from the teacher’s standpoint (Park, 2008; Vavrus, 2009), or explicitly made connections between the inequitable access to quality education and social injustice. Therefore, this critical ethnographic study uses Mission Girls’ as a case study to investigate how teachers perceive social justice and how they apply it in the quest to provide quality education.

Social justice

Epistemological camps exist on what social justice means, and how to achieve it (North, 2006; Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Shakman, & Terrell, 2009; Cochran-Smith, M, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009). Critics have pointed to the ambiguities inherent in its multiple and complex meanings, as well as its “contested ideological significance” and implications for teaching content (Balch, 2005; p.1). In education, social justice became a key terrain of mediation between capitalism and democracy, first through redistribution demands, and more recently, through recognition politics (Robertson, 2009).

Although contemporary understandings of social justice are rooted in European enlightenment and the civil rights movement (Behr, 2003; Boyles, Carusi & Attick, 2008), it has always been central in the African struggles against slavery and colonialism (Mandela, 1994; Tutu, 1999; Tikly & Dachi, 2009). Tikly and Dachi use Nancy Fraser’s (2006) social justice framework for conceptualizing access to quality education that is situated within the social justice problems in Sub Saharan Africa. Their conceptualization
of the framework has useful implications for understanding the place of social justice in Uganda’s education. For instance, *distribution* has implications for access to, and contestations about quality education. *Recognition* speaks to the need to acknowledge and include without discrimination the voices and needs of historically marginalized people in Uganda, such as women, children, the elderly, girls, disabled, LGBTQ, nomadic tribes and those affected by HIV/AIDS (De Cock, Mbori-Ngacha & Marum, 2002).

*Representation* focuses on how the marginalized people get their voices heard and affirmed in educational settings and discourses.

The social justice framework is relevant to my research because it: 1) considers the historical and political contexts in which educational injustices occur, 2) recognizes the ability of education to empower some while disempowering others, and 3) it is more holistic than the human capacity and human rights approaches because it has democratic dimensions (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

I appropriate Tyson and Park’s (2006) definition of social justice pedagogy as a process, a style and a pedagogical stance that aims for using classroom practices and content to think critically about issues of injustice that students face in their everyday lived experiences and empowers students to use their agency to challenge and transform their lives and communities.

Social justice pedagogy perceives teaching as a political act and emphasizes both content acquisition and critical consciousness. It is grounded in constructivism and has elements of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 2002), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), democratic education (Dewey, 1966) and social activism.
social justice framework, the teacher’s role is to facilitate learning by helping students make inter-textual connections by locating themselves in the texts and ‘knowledge,’ as well as to recognize and critique the gaps between the knowledge and their lived experiences (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002; Tyson & Park, 2006). As a catalyst for social change, social justice pedagogy is liberatory pedagogy because it empowers students to think critically (Freire, 1970), interrogate knowledge systems, appreciate multiple perspectives and differences and is premised on the philosophy that all humans should have equitable access to opportunities irrespective of difference or group membership (Tyson & Park, ibid; North, 2006; Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Shakman, & Terrell, 2009; Cochran-Smith, M, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009).

Although social justice pedagogy aims to empower students to be active agents in the transformation of their lives and communities, its critics have pointed to a lack of unified ideology and applicability as well as its lack of rigor (Tyson & Park, 2006). In a nutshell, however, while the term social justice in education is used more broadly to cover issues of access and pertaining to educational opportunity (see for example Tikly & Dachi, 2009), social justice pedagogy emphasizes the use of social justice ethos in classroom pedagogical practices (Tyson & Park, 2006). I argue that education in Uganda is a social justice issue, and that framing it as such is as both the recognition of its severity as it is a call to action to ensure that the voices and aspirations of marginalized groups are recognized and represented in educational discourse.
Global and social justice

There is a strong connection between social justice, greater social justice in Sub-Saharan education and the wider issues of global inequality (Balcchus, 1997; Scrase, 1997). Whereas globalization has made people, groups and nations more politically, socially, economically and emotionally connected than ever (Blair, 2010; Friedman, 2005), Sub-Saharan countries are yet to reap its promises of technological and economic development in comparison with the developed nations (Bwana, 2002; Dryden-Peterson & Young-Suk, 2006). Scholars in different fields have examined the impacts of the International Monetary Fund’s Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) on educational policies and processes in the region (Balcchus, 1997; Banya, 2005; Mamdani, 2007; Samoff & UNICEF, 1994; Vavrus 2005), how the internationalization and human rightization of basic education (Moyn, 2010) continues to alter the educational landscape and change donor-recipient dynamics (de Renzio & Hanlon, 2007; Eilor, 2004).

Neoliberal policies policed by the International Monetary Fund and other international organizations imposed a reduction in public spending on social services including education, and later, free primary education (Dryden-Peterson & Young-Suk, 2006; Mamdani, 2007). However, a combination of SAPs coupled and unfair terms of trade left most Sub Saharan governments with weak economies, high inflation due to balance of payment deficits and reliance on western donors for aid. These developments have raised questions about power and control over educational planning and implementation and driven scholarship on the efficacy and interaction between global and local programs on education, such as free primary education (de Renzio & Hanlon,
The introduction and proliferation of educational discourses for free primary education, as well as the human capital ideology that provide the impetus for global justice are best understood when situated within this global-local interaction.

The shifting nature of social justice is well explicated by Nancy Fraser (also cited by Tikly & Dachi, 2009) who provides makes connection between social justice and globalization. She posits that:

> Until recently, most theorists of justice have tacitly assumed the Westphalian sovereign state as the frame of inquiry. Today, however, the acceleration of globalization has altered the scale of social interaction. Thus, questions of social justice need to be reframed. Whether the issue is structural adjustment or indigenous land claims, immigration or global warming, unemployment or homosexual marriage, the requirements for justice cannot be ascertained unless we ask: Who precisely are the stakeholders? Which matters are genuinely national, which local, which regional, which global? Who should decide such questions, and by what decision-making processes? (Fraser, 2006, p.1)

Defining justice as “parity of participation,” Fraser posits that “[o]vercoming justice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full participants in social in social interaction” (p.16). Fraser’s analysis draws us to the complexities of social justice at the global era, and pushes us to consider “the broader economic, political, and social contexts” (Tikly & Dachi, 2009, p.121). Fraser’s work draws attention to three dimensions of social justice-economic redistribution, recognition and representation, appropriated by Tikly and Dachi in their perspective of quality education in Africa. Redistribution relates to access to economic resources and opportunities, including quality education and its potential outcomes. Using Sen’s (1999) capabilities approach, redistribution is connected to the extent to
which quality education can contribute to a person’s wellbeing and enable them to achieve their capabilities. The political dimension of recognition brings forth the questions of (mis)framing quality education and who has access to it, and in this increasingly globalized post-Westphalian era dominated by neoliberalism, education is being increasingly marketized (Tikly & Dachi, 2009). Recognition is concerned with the need to identify and consider the claims of marginalized people (women, rural dwellers, vulnerable children, refugees, indigenous groups, et cetera) and the extent to which their needs are catered for in framing of quality education. Tikly and Dachi also remind us to include their voices in understandings of quality education, and this includes the formal and informal curriculums as well as school facilitation and funding. The last dimension, participatory justice is political. Participation determines the stage at which distribution and recognition are played out, whose is included and excluded from membership and participation, and sets the stage for “staging and resolving contests over the cultural and economic dimensions” (p.17). Participation is also about whose voices are included and who counts as a member. It includes how the voices of marginalized groups are not just heard, but also included in debates about quality education.

Theoretical approaches to social justice

According to Park (2008) social justice is commonly approached from two fluid theoretical approaches, both of which have been applied to social sciences: deductive and inductive. The deductive approach is premised on an idealist conceptualization of social justice, which is then applied to socially unjust realities in a procedural manner (Ekanga, 2005; Rawls, 1971). The inductive approach, on the contrary, is premised on a realistic
conception of justice and focuses on concrete examples of social injustices as a starting point from which to highlight, interrogate challenge and change the institutional injustices present in social structures (Fraser, 2006; Freire, 1973; Park, 2009; Young, 1990; Wade, 2007).

Both approaches have been used extensively in educational discourses. John Rawls’ theory of justice is a prominent example (1971). Based on an idealistic standpoint of justice as fairness and situated on the social contract, Rawls conceived social justice as result of the fulfillment of basic principles of governance that free and rational individuals agree to in a hypothetical situation with perfect equality. Rawls posited that for justice to be achieved, each person is to have an equal right to the most basic liberty for all, and social and economic inequalities must have the greatest benefit to the least advantaged and based on equal opportunity (Park, 2008; Rawls, 1971/2014). An implicit flaw in the application of Rawls’ theory of justice from an education standpoint is that school becomes an institution whose major function is to maintain hegemonic discourses by transmitting “the consensual values of society” (Kohlberg, 1967, p.165; Tyson & Park, 2006).

Scholars in the inductive camp, tend to use a grounded theoretical approach to examine societal inequities and injustices in their work with the goal of attaining social justice. They critique Rawls’ theory for ignoring the hegemonic processes that reproduce “consensual values of society” and thereby not considering the “ontological reality” (Park, 2009, p. 3) of social injustices that are always present, often complex, sometimes (in)visible and usually hidden under the veil of ignorance (Du Bois, 1903/1989).
Scholars in this camp focus on diverse but interlinked injustices based on race, gender, sexuality and class (Anyon, 1980; Banks & Banks, 2004; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995; Mills, 1997; McIntosh, 1992; Nyanzi, 2013a, 2013b; Tamale 2009, 2011; Omi & Winant, 1993; Yoshino, 2006). Others investigate the connection between neoliberal policies and educational inequalities in the developing world (Bwana, 2002; Carnoy & Samoff, 1990; Mamdani, 2007; Mazrui, 1986; Samoff & UNESCO, 1994). A common assumption among grounded theorists in multicultural education—also shared by eminent Ugandan legal scholar, Joe Oloka-Onyango (2011)—is the view that an education system that imposes an uncritical approach to knowledge is dehumanizing and disempowers both the oppressor and the oppressed (Dillard, 2000; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2002) while one that over-emphasizes the economic benefits of education has a minimalist approach to educational equity and social justice (Apple, 2004; Rizvi & Engel, 2009).

Mainstream discourses perceive social justice from a western lens. Yet, as a concept, social justice in Africa predates colonialism (Tikly & Dachi, 2009). Archbishop Desmond Tutu and leaders like Nelson Mandela have articulated the communitarian philosophy of the African collective ethic/humanism (also called “Ubuntu”) to highlight the cultural affinity of Africans to community as paramount to individual human existence (Mandela, 1994; Tutu, 1999). Its essence is the understanding of generosity and the cosmology that one cannot exist in isolation. This study investigated how primary school teachers in their classrooms replicated these culturally relevant philosophies.
Education in Uganda

Western education in Uganda precedes colonialism and can be traced to the missionary encounter in the late 19th century, and the setting up of mission schools starting in 1895 (Furley & Watson, 1978; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007). Prior to this period, there was indigenous education that was largely oral, learner-centered and apprenticeship-based (Ssekamwa & Lugumbya, 2001). While traditional education was steeped in, and intended to strengthen respect for the cultural values, norms and epistemologies, mission education was foregrounded in religious teachings and tended to pull the convert away from his community (Ssekamwa, 2001). It is not feasible to claim that mission education was intended as a social justice issue. Furley and Watson (1978) posit that mass expansion of education was not the purpose of mission education. Rather, the initial goals of mission education were to spread Christianity and train the children of chiefs as well as new converts who were to provide manpower to the colonial government. This approach to education later changed as independence approached, and during the post-independence where a shift towards mass education became explicit.

In accordance with the 1960 Addis Ababa agreement, the Jomtien Accord and the Education for All (EFA) commitments, Uganda introduced universal primary education (UPE) in 1997. Like other countries in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa, educational enrolment and participation rates by children of school going age in Uganda has increased significantly (UNESCO, 2010). In Uganda, an increase in access to schools has been matched by an increase in the dropout rate as well as a decrease in quality (Moyi, 2012; Maajgard & Mingat, 2012; Lewin & Sabates, 2011; Ministry of Finance, Planning
and Economic Development, 2010). The 2010 UNESCO report places Uganda’s Primary Completion Rates (PCR) at 50%, the lowest in the East African region. This is partly due to inadequate funding, low teacher remuneration and motivation, culturally oppressive practices and teacher-centered examination-driven teaching approaches that do not address the needs of students (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012; Maajgard and Mingat, 2011, Scrase, 1997).

While governments in the region have prioritized education by increasing budgetary allocation, abolishing school fees and expanding opportunities (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007; Ohba, & Access, Equity and Transitions in Education in Low Income Countries, 2011; Lewin & Sabates, 2012; Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MOFPED), 2013), Uganda’s primary school educational standards and learning outcomes are comparatively lower than the majority of its peers in the region.

Are our children learning? Annual assessment report Uganda (Uwezo, 2010) makes sobering revelations about the skill levels of students in Uganda in literacy and numeracy. Of the 27 districts surveyed in the study, 28% of Grade 7 pupils in the districts surveyed could not read and comprehend a story of Grade 2 difficulty, whereas 15% could not solve at least two numerical numbers with Grade 2 difficulty. Consistent with research on enrollment patterns in the region, students in rural and distant areas like northern Uganda were most vulnerable to difficulties in numeracy and literacy.

Politics and education in Uganda: An intersection

To better understand Uganda’s education, it is important to place education within the wider social and political context of the country and Sub Saharan Africa. This
necessitates a brief overview of Uganda’s history and the nature of its present day politics. As a politically young nation (Uganda celebrated 50 years of nominal independence from the British colonial government last year), Uganda has a history of civil strife and contestations (Karugire, 1980; Mamdani, 1996; Mutibwa, 1992) as evident in its history of violent conflict and military coups since independence in 1962.

Uganda’s longest military conflict, the 25 year civil-conflict between the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and the National Resistance Army (NRA) was a result of historical factors stemming from the colonial era, a manifestation of internal divisions and contradictions, a lack of internal democracy in what became Uganda, and later a clash of egos and the need to serve agendas for military support (Karugire, 1980; Mamdani, 1996; Mutibwa, 1992; Soto, 2009). Eminent Ugandan historian, Samwiri Karugire (1980) has written extensively about British colonial disinterest in Northern Uganda and how the region was largely ignored. Karugire writes:

[T]he Northern Province of Uganda had been included in the Protectorate with a certain amount of reluctance on the part of the British officials and that even then this was done to preclude other European powers from acquiring the area rather than from a desire to acquire the area for its own sake. Once the province had been acquired, it was left very much to its own devices so far as economic and social development was concerned (p. 140).

The political marginalization of what was called the Northern Province extended to the educational sector where the African secondary schools and teacher training colleges were concentrated in the central, western and eastern regions of the country. (Furley & Watson, 1970; Ssekamwa, 1997). Karugire again:
In the field of education the Northern Province was even more neglected even long after the Protectorate government had taken an interest in the field of African education and the excuse for letting this province lag behind in the extension of social services was always the same: its stage of development was not yet of the order to make full use of its facilities (p.140).

The salient question was how people in the region were able to take advantage of education in face of these inequities. These educational disparities, as well as the religious conflicts and border disputes present a backdrop to the northern Uganda conflict (Karugire, 1980). Further, the 'divide and rule' policy used by the British colonial government resulted in northern Uganda being administered indirectly by proxies and agents of the colonial government and the compartmentalization of roles along ethnic lines created the contradictions that made civil strife inevitable. For instance, due to their dark skin complexion and tall athletic build, northerners were recruited into the armed forces, while the Baganda were co-opted into the formal sector. This colonial structural compartmentalization was inherited by post-independence governments, and as a consequence there was, until the mid-eighties- an over-representation of northerners in the armed forces. And as the military became synonymous with, and notorious for violence against civilians, northerners became ‘stereotyped’ as violent people.

The 1986 military coup by the NRA sought to create a new shift in the political structure of Uganda was both a result and a symptom of the internal contradictions in Uganda. The NRA, in the guise of creating a “national army” representative of all tribes in the country dismissed a large proportion of northerners and sought to punish those who were responsible for committing atrocities. The Holy Spirit Movement was formed, later morphing into the Lords Resistance Movement. The conflict was initially a military
response to persecution of Luo communities that evolved into a full scale war (Soto, 2009), and was later co-opted into the post 9/11 global war against terror.

Conforming to post cold war neo-liberal policies, Uganda has metamorphosed from a one-party dictatorship to a quasi-multiparty democratic system albeit with weak institutions and personalized rule (Oloka-Onyango, 2004) with corruption and patronage (Mwenda, 2007) used as means to maintain government survival as well as win allies by the small ruling elite. While there has been a degree of economic growth and political prudence ushered in by the now 27-year-old presidency of General Yoweri Museveni, grand corruption and lack of political accountability still exist. This situation has been exacerbated by neoliberal policies that have led to budget cuts and massive privatization of business entities in the country. While education continues to get the biggest share of the national budget, the funds are inadequate and as a result, government relies on aid and grants to finance the rest of the budget. Consequently, donors and NGOs now have more power than in the 1960’s to influence educational policies and practices (Samoff & UNESCO, 1994). In addition, under-resourced schools pass the hidden costs to parents and poorly remunerated and inadequately trained teachers are unprepared to provide quality instruction. These problems impact the quality of education at all levels (Mamdani, 2007).

Further, as a region recovering from over two decades of war, northern Uganda is still politically, socially and economically marginalized (Mamdani, 1996; Mutibwa, 1992; Soto, 2009). While there is a plethora of statistical data that examines education dynamics in Uganda (see for example, Lewin & Sabates, 2012; Moyi, 2012; Lewin &
Little, 2011), there is a need for ethnographic studies to investigate teachers’ classroom pedagogical practices. Moreover, at donor and inter-governmental levels, there has been a shift away from inputs for access and quality to learning outcomes, including a focus on pedagogy (Maatjard & Mingat, 2012).

Historical development of Uganda’s education

Only Nyasaland [Malawi] can equal Uganda in the extent to which missions have been responsible for Native education.


Western education in Uganda has its roots in, and still bears the imprints of missionary religious education. This form of education was introduced shortly after the arrival of Christian missions at the end of the 19th century. Nowhere else was the demand for western education stronger than in the East African region. Indeed, Buganda chiefs and agents were at the forefront of setting up schools in Kenya and South Sudan (Furley & Watson, 1978). In contrast to the predominantly oral traditional/indigenous education, the mission schools taught the “three Rs” (Reading, Writing, Arithmetic) as well as hygiene, with literacy as a requirement before baptism (Furley & Watson, 1978). From the colloquially named vernacular or bush schools to senior secondary schools, schools in Uganda were under the tight grip of mission organizations, which set curricula, hired teachers, enrolled students and set policies informed by their religious philosophies. These organizations relied on donations from their partners abroad as well as school fees. For the most part, the colonial government in Uganda was a bystander, happy to delegate
the duty of educating its subjects to the missions (Furley & Watson, ibid; Ssekamwa, 1997; Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001).

Following recommendations from various education review commissions, the pre-independence period saw political battles between the colonial (and later post-independence) governments and mission organizations over differences in education perspectives and emphasis. Whereas mission education had a predominantly academic and religious focus, the governments sought to provide a non-secular, unifying, practical and technical education that was foregrounded in local realities, developed local strengths in agriculture and industry and was aligned with national development goals (Furley & Watson, 1978; Ssekamwa, 1997).

Consequently, the newly constituted postcolonial government in Uganda took over the management and funding of the national educational system using the Education Act of 1963 (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). The Education Act placed the ownership and management of the education sector under the government. For the first time, government became the most influential actor, and as a result, subsequent governments were able – to an extent—to set education goals consistent with the national development goals (Ssekamwa, 1997), including the rapid expansion of schools and increase in enrollment across the board.

This rapid expansion of access continued with introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 but with mixed results (Lewin & Sabates, 2012; MOFPED, 2010). Even though the level of access has increased, and gender disparities have reduced, issues of quality and attrition persist (Tikly & Dachi, 2009; UNESCO,
UNESCO’s 2010 evaluative report shows that Uganda’s primary completion rates (PCR) are at 50%. This is consistent with a World Bank commissioned study (Maajgard & Mingat, 2012) which found that while the primary enrollment rate (PER) in the Sub Saharan region grew at 3.1 percent between 1999 and 2009 (a remarkable increase compared to 0.8 percent in the 1990s), countries in the region are still off track on achieving universal primary completion rates (PCR), with one third of children of school going age still out of school, the majority of them from poor families.

Uganda’s education system is patterned along the English colonial-mission education model. Uganda follows a 7-6-3 academic system with seven years in primary school, six in secondary and three for undergraduate degrees (Government of Uganda, 1993). Aligning individualist, competitive and examination-driven western education practices and knowledge systems with African traditional/indigenous collectivist and hands-on education continues to be a challenge for African countries like Uganda (Woolman, 2001; Ssekamwa, Furley & Watson, 1978; Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). Instruction in Ugandan schools is mostly the traditional teacher-centered style, with the teacher and the textbook as the source of knowledge. The student is the hypothetical blank slate waiting to be filled with information that flows from the school tap (Freire, 1973).

There is a link between Uganda’s education, health population growth and national development (MOFPED, 2010). As such, Uganda’s education dynamics need to be understood as part of the larger demographic processes. The 2013 World Population Data Sheet (Population Reference Bureau, 2013a) shows that Uganda’s total fertility rates
are at 6.2%, the sixth highest in the world. This rate is comparatively higher than Sub Saharan Africa’s at 5.2, the entire Africa’s at 4.8 and the global rate at 2.5 (Population Reference Bureau, 2013a). Further, 49% of Uganda’s population is 15 years or younger, while only 2% are 65 years and above (Population Reference Bureau, 2013b). Uganda’s rapidly increasing population demographics necessitate clear and effective approaches for economic and social development. The Ugandan government has placed education-primary education- as a key strategy for social and economic development.

To this end, the government of Uganda appointed the Education Policy Review Commission, also known as the Ssenteza Kajubi Commission, in 1989 to review education policies and make recommendations. Among its conclusions was that assessment methods used were flawed because they assessed lower order skills. The report recommended the introduction of free primary education and reform/restructuring of the education system. As a follow-up, the government published the extensively cited, *Education for National Integration and Development* (Government of Uganda, 1993). Like the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the 2010-2015 National Development Plan as well as the 2040 National Development Plan, the White Paper placed education at the center of national development in the (Essama-Nssah, 2011; Government of Uganda, 1993; MOFPED, 2010; Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). More importantly for this study, the Government of Uganda endorsed social justice as one of the objectives of basic education. The paper reported that basic education should “enhance spiritual and moral values and social justice” (p.38). But while the endorsement of social justice is a positive step, the government report neither defines nor elaborates on its conception of social
justice. Rather, it seeks to use education to transform its economy into a middle-income economy by 2040 (MOFPED, 2010) with science and technology as the bedrock.

It can be inferred from these developments that: 1) goals of educational expansion in Uganda were consistent with that of the EFA, and conformed to the human capital approach and neoliberal initiatives (Mamdani, 2007) (this will be discussed in detail later), 2) the endorsement of social justice is both a recognition of inequitable access to educational opportunity and a call to action, and 3) that while the UPE policy goals are similar to those in the EFA charter — a reflection and example of the transfer of initiatives from the global north- their implementation was more complex and dynamic, as Varus and Bartlett (2012) have concluded from their study in Tanzania.

The implementation of Education for All has ignited a rapid expansion of educational access in Sub Saharan Africa (Tikly & Dachi, 2009; Moyi, 2012; Oketch & Rolleston, 2009; UNESCO, 2002, 2012). However, educational quality continues to be a challenge (Dryden-Peterson & Young-Suk, 2006; Lewin & Sabates, 2012; Majgaard & Mingat, 2012; Mamdani, 2007). While quality can be- and has been- defined in various ways depending on context, Tikly and Barrett suggest that in Sub Saharan Africa, definitions of educational quality are dominated by two contemporary approaches: 1) the human capital approach, and 2) the human rights approach. They propose a third approach- the social justice and capability approach- that draws from the two perspectives and is contextual to the social and material conditions by situating social justice within conceptualizations of quality education and development in the region.
Approaches to quality of education in Sub Saharan Africa

“Social justice issues in education in Africa are multi-layered. They are over determined by the realities of poverty and inequality on the continent and by Africa’s worsening position in relation to the global economy” (Tikly & Dachi, 2009, p.131)

In Chapter 1, I drew on scholarship (Balcchus, 1997; Scrase, 1997; Tikly and Dachi, 2009) that situates access to quality education within the contextual elements of poverty and inequality in Sub Saharan Africa. Although there is some consensus that educational expansion has improved literacy levels, there is disagreement on what quality means or how it should be evaluated within the debates about free education (Dryden-Peterson & Young-Suk, 2006; Lewin, 2009; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007). Lewin & Sabates, for instance, suggest that access needs to go beyond the focus on school, and include quality education (Lewin, 2009). Quality is contextual, and so debates about framing continue to rage globally (Tikly & Dachi, 2009; UNESCO, 2005) and within Uganda (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006). What follows is a discussion of the human rights and human capital, two of the most common approaches in framing debates about and policies on educational quality in the region. This is followed by a discussion of a third approach, the social justice and capability approach.

The human capital approach to quality education

Scholars in comparative and international education contend that the human capital approach to educational quality is the most pervasive in developing countries (Apple, 2004; Tikly, 2011; Thapliyal, Vally, & Spreen, 2012). The human capital approach to quality education focuses on expanding access to reduce inequality in education, such as imbalances brought about by gender, socio-economic class, residence,
conflict and race. Foregrounded by positivist assumptions, proponents of the human capital approach use empirical data to show the impact of education on marginalized communities such as family health and nutrition, the declining levels of achievement gaps between difference sexes, races and communities (Maajgard & Mingat, 2012; UNESCO, 2010).

Despite advocacy by UN bodies such as UNICEF and civil society organizations for new approaches to quality education such as child-friendly schools, the human capital approach is the most dominant approach for evaluating quality education in Uganda (Thapliyal, Vally, & Spreen, 2013). For instance, the Education Standards Agency of Uganda’s Ministry of Education and Sports (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006) lists the following benchmarks as key indicators for quality education:

- Enrollment figures
- The number of classrooms constructed
- The number of capacity training inputs provided
- The disbursement of Capitation Grant (CG) and the School Facilitation Grant (SFG).

And while these benchmarks are useful in evaluation and accountability, they ignore the improvised nature of teaching and learning.

Thapliyal, Vally and Spreen (2013) suggest that the dominance of the human capital approach speaks more about the power that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have in driving educational policy in aid dependent nations. The strength of the human capital approach lies in linking human capital development and
economic growth. Further, when applied to education quality, the human capital approach uses visible inputs and outputs to determine accountability. However, in the case of Uganda, the increase in funding has not improved the level of teaching and learning. On the contrary, there has been a steady decline in performance targets. The National Assessment for Primary Education report (MOES, 2003) shows that despite progress with these benchmarks, the targets for numeracy and literacy have continued to decline. For instance, numeracy levels at Primary 6 declined from 41% in 1999 to 20.5% in 2003. As a result, critics have pointed to the inadequacy of the approach in directly impacting teaching quality and teacher performance (Bukenya, 2005; MOES, 2003; Ward, Penny & Read, 2006).

At its core, a human capital approach to quality education has a redistributive justice approach to justice (Young, 1990; Fraser, 2006) that ignores the non-economic elements that enhance social injustice. By so doing, the human capital approach tends to conflate educational access and equity; and overemphasizes the economic benefits of education for achieving national economic goals (Nussbaum, 2000; Rizvi & Engel, 2009; Scrase, 1997; Tikly & Barrett, 2011). At best, it assumes a trickledown effect on socio-political factors, and at worst, it ignores the importance of these factors to national development (Fraser, 1999, 2007; Young, 1990). Moreover, the human capital approach to equity and social justice- with its neoliberal standpoint- perceives education as a primarily economic affair (Rizvi & Engel, 2009).

Further, the human capital approach to education is grounded in human capital theory. However, because human capital theory is inadequate for understanding
educational quality (Tikly & Barrett, 2011), influential texts on the subject (see for example, Heneveld & Craig, 1996; Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991) employ the school effectiveness model. The school effectiveness model employs an input-output approach to education, with schools as spaces where inputs (financial and material resources, teachers and students) are acted upon by educational processes to produce outcomes. While this approach fits within the World Bank cost efficiency objectives (value for money spent), and has been useful for evaluating whether students and teachers are physically present in the classroom, it has fundamental flaws (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). Most salient is its over-reliance on standardized testing and over-simplification of teaching and learning processes.

Scholars have also critiqued the human capital approach to quality education for its capitalist labor approach – a factory chain model-- that silences the voices of the students, stifles critical thinking and negates critical democratic citizenship (Apple, 2004; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2002). According to Alexander (2006), the EFA discourse has moved away from commitment to quality to a focus on the measurement of quality without considering what quality entails, specifically, the importance of pedagogy. Further, the EFA discourse has moved from a commitment to quality to its measurement without adequate consideration of what quality entails, particularly in the vital domain of pedagogy. Pedagogy, indeed, is often the missing ingredient in EFA discussion of quality" (p.vii). Alexander also critiques the quality indicator frameworks from EFA and international sources for their concern with input-output processes and their neglect of international pedagogical research. Eminent Ugandan scholar, Oloka-Onyango (2011)
shares this view and situates the human capital approach within the government’s recent move to abolish government funding for arts courses in favor of sciences at university level. Making the case for critical thinking and lifelong learning for educating Ugandan children for the 21st century, he warns that the current over-emphasis of training students for the job market—which he likens to training robots—is a shortsighted move against innovation and critical citizenship, and sets a dangerous path for Uganda’s social and political development.

There is a need for more examination of the impact of the prevalent policies foregrounded in human capital approaches on educational systems in aid dependent nations like Uganda.

**Human rights approach to quality education**

Human right-based initiatives have become common policy issues recently (Vavrus, 2009; Barrett, 2007; Tikly & Barrett, 2007). In contrast to the human capital approach, the human rights approach to education quality considers human rights as “fundamental, indivisible and integral” (Tikly & Barrett, p.5) to national development and seeks to secure the rights of children through education (Unterhalter, 2007). The human rights approach to quality has been used by civil society organizations such as the Education Rights Project in South Africa as well as activists to hold governments accountable to human rights. Recently, this approach has become popular with international UN agencies—especially UNICEF’s Child Friendly Schools (CFS) approach—which have transported it to local and international settings (Thapliyal, Vally, & Spreen, 2013; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). However, this approach is yet gain traction in
multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) whose prescriptions still hold sway in funding at the macro-level (Vally & Spreen, 2012). Consequently, this approach is now more visible in policy than practice in Sub Saharan Africa, as Vavrus and Bartlett (2012) and Samoff (1994) have found.

Katarina Tomesvki (2001), the former UN Rapporteur on the Right to Education suggests two dimensions to the human rights framework: 1) That education is a human right and all governments have a responsibility to provide free, compulsory education for all children, and protect that right; and 2) That the rights-based approach to education encompasses both the rights in and through education. Rights in education revolve around the use of curricular and pedagogical practices that are culturally responsive to the needs of learners with the goal of making school a child-friendly space. Rights in education include the introduction of local languages, abolishing corporal punishment in schools, introduction of learner-centered teaching approaches and democratic school structures of student leadership. Rights through education revolve around initiatives that enhance the active participation of students, teachers, parents and communities with the goal of fostering a rights-based society grounded in critical citizenship and accountability (Thapliyal, Vally, & Spreen, 2013). These include the impetus towards community schools, introduction of School Management Committees (SMCs) and the strengthening of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs).

The human rights approach has philosophical and methodological flaws. It has been critiqued for its lack of contextualization of human rights within cultural conditions (Tikly & Barrett, 2007), for human rights are neither politically neutral nor universal
(Moyn, 2010). Further, it over-emphasizes human rights and ignores the historical, social and political events and structures which enhance/perpetuate social injustices, and for Sub-Saharan African countries, these include the role of colonialism, structural adjustment policies of multilateral organizations and unfair trade policies.

The human capital perspective, and to a lesser extent the human rights approach have proliferated educational policies and practices in developing countries as a result of local processes as well as best practices transplanted from the global north. And while both perspectives have strengths, scholars have critiqued their over-emphasis of high-stakes testing and human rights, respectively, as well as their lack of contextual grounding. In addition, both approaches are inadequate in solving the problem of quality education in developing countries. Tikly and Dachi’s (2011) social justice and capability approach is a third, and holistic approach to understanding quality education.

Drawing from Sen (1992, 1999), Tikly and Barrett (2011) propose a third approach- a social justice and capability approach that draws from both the human capital and human rights approaches. Table 2.1 shows the differences between the three conceptual approaches to quality education with regards to their implications for teaching and learning.

The Social Justice and Capability Approach to Quality Education

It is grounded in both social justice and the capability approach and use the capability approach both as a language and conceptual framework. Conceptualized by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (1992, 1999, 2009), the capability approach focuses on access to opportunities for all citizens to live the kind of life they want to live on their
own terms, to flourish and achieve their potential, rather than economic models such as Gross National Product (GDP). Providing equal access to quality education and health is a central component of the capability framework, imperative for sustainable development and a foundation for the attainment of social justice (Nussbaum, 2010).

And while the capability approach has its weaknesses in application (Walker & Unterhalter (2007), for example, on its assumption of education as an “unqualified good”), it offers a framework with which to have a conversation about quality education. Its strengths include: 1) its bottom up approach to social justice, 2) the centrality of basic education and health as constituent components of human capacity development and social justice, and 3) its critique of the notion that an improvement in economic growth correlates robustly with, and trickles down to political liberty, educational opportunities and gender relations. More importantly, its holistic approach and focus on constraints and capabilities as a lens to examine social justice pedagogy in Uganda opens doors to connecting societal dynamics to classroom pedagogy.

Contextual Issues

The 2 decade war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels and the Uganda's national army had adverse impacts on people in northern Uganda (Bird, Higgins and McKay, 2010; UNOCHA, 2003). The United Nations (UNOCHA, 2003) estimates that 10,000 children were abducted in northern Uganda in 2002 alone and the number of displaced people rose from 800,000 in 2002 to 1.2 million in 2003. Between 4000 - 5000 children (also known as "night commuters") trekked daily for long distances to and from urban areas for shelter. In addition, the lack of security made it challenging
for provision and coordination of humanitarian assistance. So catastrophic was the war on the local population, and especially the children and women (Annan, Blattman, Mazurana & Carlson, 2011) that the UN undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs, Jan Egeland called it "one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world" during his visits to the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of emphasis</th>
<th>Human capital development approach</th>
<th>Education through a human rights perspective</th>
<th>Human capability and social justice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ways to evaluate</td>
<td>Science and technology; high stakes testing</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>Equity and social justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>Modernization theories</td>
<td>Bottom-up but routed in western approaches to human rights</td>
<td>Guided by people’s needs and aspirations for fulfilling their desires and potential (Sen, 1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epistemological foundations</td>
<td>Positivism and post-positivism</td>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>Social reconstructionism</td>
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<td>Implications for education</td>
<td>Education as reproduction</td>
<td>Child-friendly education</td>
<td>Education for social justice</td>
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<td>Implications for teaching and learning</td>
<td>Teacher-centered/examination-oriented approaches</td>
<td>Child centered approaches</td>
<td>Holistic approach</td>
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<td>Reliance</td>
<td>Quantitative data</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative</td>
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Table 2.1. Approaches to quality education in Sub Saharan Africa

The war resulted in exacerbated the already soaring poverty in the region. A study carried out in 13 districts in northern Uganda (fieldwork plus data analysis) by Bird,
Higgins and McKay (2004) found that: 1) conflict and insecurity impacted civilians and their livelihoods and caused chronic and intergenerational poverty, a result of people being chronically poor and deprived over a sustained period of time passed down from generation to generation. In addition, they found that educated supported resilience in post-conflict settings by protecting students from sliding into poverty as well as limiting their vulnerability to chronic and intergenerational poverty. Education offered people opportunities to draw on social networks, trade, travel, engage with leaders and take leadership positions.

However, war exacerbated the social inequities in the region and negatively affected the social systems, resulting in high rates of drug and alcohol abuse, domestic and sexual violence, HIV/AIDS infections and suicide (Kizza, 2011; Kizza, Hjelmeland, Kinyanda, & Knizek, 2012; Rossow, 2005, Uganda Radio Network, 2011). The quality of education also bear the effects of the two decade conflict as millions of people were displaced, thousands of children abducted and millions displaced due to insecurity. Moreover, this affected their progress as well as their ability to perform well in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Further, schools were either closed or abandoned, and good quality teachers moved to more peaceful areas, impacting the quality of schools.

Based on the contextual issues elucidated above and foregrounded by a pilot study I conducted in the summer of 2012, this dissertation is premised on three propositions: 1) that education is a social justice issue in Sub Saharan Africa, and specifically in Uganda, 2) how teachers perceive social justice in non-western contexts may be different from
western hegemonic discourse, and 3) social justice must transcend the broader educational issues to how teachers apply social justice in their classroom pedagogical practices. These propositions guided the formulation of the research questions as well as the analysis and discussion of the findings. In the next section, I review the literature on social justice and social justice pedagogy.

This dissertation study investigates the following research questions:

1) How do teachers at MGS perceive social justice?
2) How do MGS educators apply social justice in their classroom pedagogical practices in their quest to provide quality education?

To guide this inquiry, I employ a critical theoretical framework, which will be discussed in the next section.

Critical Theory

The advent of globalization and neo-liberal policies has led to the proliferation of human capital approach that tends to rely on statistical data and high-stakes testing that enhance rote memorization as measurements of quality (Alexander, 2006; Bartlett & Vavrus, 2012), and over-emphasize the economic benefits of education. Rather than use this minimalist approach to educational equity (Rizvi & Engels, 2009), the capability approach (Sen, 2001) is a critical and grounded conceptual approach for this study.

Critical theory evolved out of the Frankfurt School in the political context of post-World War 1 Germany with Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse as its most prominent theorists. These theorists were emboldened by their belief that the
world was infested with subjugation and domination (Gibson, 1986), a phenomenon further exacerbated by capitalism (Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1989).

Critical theory has diverse ideological camps driving its development (Beauchamp, 1968), but is united by a set of assumptions best summarized by Kincheloe and McLaren, which include:

“that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious or unconscious awareness); that certain groups in any society are privileged over others, and that although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary or inevitable…”

Kincheloe & McLaren, Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research (p. 139-140)

Critical theory assumes that oppression is complex, multifaceted, with intersections, and critiques mainstream research practices for historically perpetuating and reproducing different forms of oppression (Bartolome, 1994; Chilisa, 2011; Dei, 2000; Kinloch, 2009; Paris, 2011; Rosaldo, 1989; Scheurich & Young, 1997; Smith, 1999; Thomas, 1993; Tyson, 1999).

Whereas social justice as a vocabulary has its genesis in the classical Roman empire (Behr, 2003; Boyles, Carusi & Attick, 2009; Tikly & Dachi, 2008), was prominently used in civil rights America and apartheid South Africa (Mandela, 1994; Tutu, 1999), and more recently in teacher education and professional development (Brosnan & Erchick, 2007; Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Shakman, & Terrell, 2009;
Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009; Nieto, 1999; North, 2006; Tyson & Park, 2006) and classroom practices (Joseph, 2013; Park, 2008), it has always been at the heart of African cosmology and wellbeing. Indigenous understandings of justice existed in the continent of Africa before contact with European colonialism (Tikly & Dachi, 2009). Social justice is at the core of African cultural life and central to African humanism. For instance, the concept of Ubuntu (derived from omuntu which means “a human being” in Ugandan Bantu dialects) emphasizes the cultural affinity of Africans to community and the environment as paramount to individual human existence. Its essence is the understanding of oneself through the eyes of the community (Mandela, 1994; Tutu, 1999).

The desire for social justice inspired African nationalistic struggles against the injustices of colonialism, slavery and Apartheid. In South Africa, social justice movements by students (some as young as ten) and educators played a significant role in the resistance against apartheid (Biko & Stubbs, 1979; Morrow, 1990; Nkomo, 1984; Weider, 2001; Wieder, 2002). The formation of the United Nations, the advent of globalization and the lessons learned from Nazi Germany enabled social justice to transcend traditional territories and borders (Fraser, 2007; Young, 1990). However, people’s perceptions and application of social justice is more contextualized. In their study of learner-centered pedagogy in Tanzania, Vavrus and Bartlett (2012) concluded that: 1) the universalization of meaning and application of policies is inaccurate, and 2) transplanted policies (such as social justice) from the global north are often adapted in practice to suit the material and social conditions in which teaching and learning operate.
African philosopher Pauline Houtondji (1999) agrees with the first view and argues that words change meaning when they cross the Atlantic, and for social justice, its meaning and application are certainly not universal. I foreground these assumptions in examining what social justice means to my research subjects, their multiple and contradictory versions of social justice as they see it, and in asking questions and interpreting what this means to them.

The critical theoretical approach was relevant for the study because in the following ways: 1) it provided the lens to recognize and negotiate issues of power, privilege and oppression embedded within educational processes, 2) it allowed me to be open to multiple perspectives and conceptualizations of social justice, 3) it informed my classroom observations of social justice pedagogy, and 4) it enabled me to critically reflect on my positionality as a researcher at all stages of the research process.

Summary

This chapter summarized the literature on social justice, primary education in Uganda and quality education. It explored the literature on social justice by mapping the field and situating the EFA and UPE programs within the global justice movements for equity of access to the marginalized peoples of the world, especially those in the developing world. Further, two approaches to social justice were discussed— the inductive approach and the deductive approach. The latter was more evident in my participants’ understanding of social justice. This was followed by a review of literature on education in Uganda by situating the state of primary education within the historical developments and contextual political issues that have impacted and continue to be impacted by it. This
was followed by a review of literature on quality education while situating the UPE evaluation strands within the cost-efficiency model emphasized by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Next, a brief overview of the contextual elements focuses on the social and material conditions that continue to impact the implementation of educational policies such as EFA and free primary education often imported, or rather, transplanted from the west without due regard to the context. And yet, as Vavrus & Bartlett (2012) found in their study, context plays an influential role in driving how teachers at MGS implement policies. For instance, the social and material conditions at MGS (such as over-crowded classrooms, lack of technology and learning resources) impacts teachers’ ability to effectively use learner-centered approaches as required by policy. Lastly, a brief discussion of critical theory is provided to elucidate the theoretical framework for the study.

In what follows in the next chapter, I discuss the research methodology, with emphasis on data analysis.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This study was designed to investigate teachers’ perceptions of social justice and how they apply social justice in their pedagogical practices in the quest for quality education. Grounded in the post modernist philosophy that there are multiple truths (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), this study seeks to bring to the table alternative paradigms of quality education and social justice that may differ from the normative discourses that are dominated by the distributive framework (Fraser, 2006). This study attempts to answer the following questions: 1) How do teachers at MGS perceive social justice? 2) How do they apply their social justice beliefs in the classroom pedagogical practices in the quest to provide quality education?

In this chapter, I describe the methodological decisions and procedures used in my study. First, I propose critical ethnography in order to privilege participant narratives and be open about the inherently political processes that empower and constrain what teachers are able, or not able to do in their quest to provide quality education. Second, I situate myself methodologically within the study and discuss the potential for bias as well as the strengths that my positionality brings to the study. Third, I outline the research
design including the data sources, sampling techniques and data analysis. Fourth, I discuss the processes I employed to ethically represent what I learned from the study and about my participants. Finally, I explain how I cultivated networks and built trustworthiness in the quest to ensure validity.

Overview of the Methodology: Critical Ethnography

This qualitative study (Glesne, 1999) employed critical ethnography (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). Thomas (1993) defines critical ethnography as “conventional ethnography with a political purpose” (p.4). It aims to “describe, analyze, and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centers, and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain” (Thomas, 1993, p.2-3). Critical ethnography is foregrounded by an “ethical responsibility” (Madison, 2005), which according to Madison is “a compelling source of duty and commitment based on moral principles of human freedom and well-being, and hence a compassion for the suffering of living beings” (p.5) by creating change through emancipation (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). The role of the critical ethnographer, therefore, is to use their craft to disrupt the status quo by highlighting the often-obscure operations of power and control in order to counter social conditions on the ground (Madison, 2005; Tyson, 1999; Thomas, 1993). Critical ethnography contributes to discourses of social justice and emancipation by the researcher resisting domestication and using their skills and knowledge “to make accessible—to penetrate the borders and break through the confines in defense of—the voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise constrained and out of reach” (Madison, 2006, p.5).
Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) posit that critical ethnography is the most suitable methodology for critical theory because it uses critical theory both as a theory and as a “mode of interpretation” (Murillo, 2004, in Madison, ibid). Following Kincheloe and McLaren’s position on compatibility, I use critical theory as the theoretical approach with which to formulate, conduct and analyze this study. Next, I define critical ethnography and examine its major tenets. Then, I provide a brief history of critical ethnography, pointing out the influence of British anthropology and The Chicago School. This is followed by a differentiation between conventional and critical ethnography suffices.

Background

Critical ethnography in the United States evolved out of 19th century British anthropological traditions and the 1960s Chicago School. As an academic discipline, 19th century anthropology relied primarily on questionnaires administered by colonial subjects or agents (such as missionaries, traders, sailors, explorers and colonial administrators) that used it to obtain data from local colonial outposts and sent them to the colonial metropolis to be analyzed and interpreted by “arm-chair” ethnologists. The first methodological shift occurred later towards the end of the 19th century when more ethnologists took the voyage to the outposts to conduct surveys themselves (Madison, 2005). However, the data was still methodologically flawed and distorted because the surveys were based on a priori determined questions skewed to benefit the colonial empire. The third shift grew out those distortions and weaknesses and the growing demand for more in depth studies. To this end, 20th century anthropology took a turn for longer engagements in the field, and created the foundation for long-term fieldwork.
Among the most prominent was Bronislaw Malinowski (1926, 1945) in Britain and Franz Boas (1938) who, as Davis (cited in Madison, 2005) writes:

[H]ad come to recognize the complexity of the so-called primitive and to link this with both an attack on cultural evolutionism and a deep and genuine (if sometime naïve and unreflexive) opposition to ethnocentrism...

...Both were concerned to recognize and include in their analysis the interconnectedness of each individual society’s cultural forms and structures” (Madison, 2005, p.11).

For Malinowski, this interconnectedness was expressed in Radcliffe-Brown’s structural functionalism which deems human behavior as a function of the structures that guide and determine culture and conduct- exclusive of external influences, while in Boas’ America, interconnectedness took the form of an increasing and insatiable thirst for complexity of cultures (see, for example, Boas, 1938).

If 19th century anthropology gave critical ethnography its foundation, the Chicago School of Ethnography gave it impetus in and fueled its prominence starting in the 1920s and later with the “Chicago Irregulars” of the 1960s. The Chicago School was both an ideological response to the growing influence of positivism and an intellectual response to the neglected urban areas of Chicago inhabited by the underclass. Thomas (1993) credits the Chicago School for laying the groundwork for “a vibrant and increasingly methodologically sophisticated program of interpretive ethnography” (p.11; Madison, 2005, p.11). Key contributors included Robert Park’s work on urban fieldwork, John Dewey on pragmatism, and Herbert Bloomer’s work on symbolic interactionism (Madison, 2005). Although both critical and conventional ethnography share a history, there are clear philosophical differences, as I explain further below.
# Critical Ethnography and Conventional Ethnography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>How do we reflect and evaluate our purpose, intentions, and frames of analysis as researchers?</em></td>
<td>I used critical theory as a framework with which to continuously reflect on my research goal of understanding how teachers perceive and apply social justice. And while my autobiography informs the research (Ellis &amp; Bochner, 2000; Subedi, 2006, 2011; Errante, 2000; Peshkin, 1988) I prioritize the voices and experiences of the educators (Fine, 1994; Madison, 2005) but while acting as an advocate for social change, collaborating with them to create the change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How do we predict consequences or evaluate our own potential to do harm?</em></td>
<td>I followed the ethical concerns in the study by using informed consent and liaising with participants about what can, and what was shared privately (Errante, 2000). Further, to prevent imposition and academic imperialism (Rosaldo, 1989), I intend to collaborate with participants to ensure achieve emancipatory goals (Ozanne &amp; Murray, 1995; Kincheloe &amp; McLaren, 1994).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How do we create and maintain dialogue of collaboration in our research projects between ourselves and others?</em></td>
<td>I spent considerable time with participants creating rapport (Madison, 2005) and used a dialogic interview format (Patton, 1990) and a narrative inquiry approach (Connelly &amp; Clandinin, 2006; Czarniawska, 2004). Second, I continuously reflected on issues of power, respect, trust and continuous collaboration with my subjects in co-creating knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How is the specificity of the local story relevant story relevant to the broader meanings and operations of the human condition?</em></td>
<td>That perceptions and applications of social justice vary, especially in non-western contexts. And while there are similarities between the MGS and the broader meanings, in-depth understanding of the phenomena and context using thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973), rather than generalizability is the aim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How—in what location or through what intervention will our work make the greatest contribution to equity, freedom and justice?</em></td>
<td>This research study is a starting point for relationships that will outlast the study (Bartolome, 1994; Kinloch, 2009). My participants and I will work collaborate in initiating strategies to ensure that social justice pedagogy is applied efficiently in the quest to provide their students with quality education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Application of Critical Ethnography (Questions from Madison, 2005, p.5)
Spradley (1979) defines ethnography as “a culture studying culture...with a body of knowledge that includes research techniques, ethnographic theory, and hundreds of cultural descriptions. Ethnography seeks to build a systematic understanding of human cultures from the perspectives of those who have learned them” (Spradley, 1979, p.10-11). Although both conventional and critical ethnography evolve out of ethnographic theory, the latter has an explicit social justice orientation (Thomas, 1993; Madison, 2005). Critical ethnography begins with a passion to investigate injustice, and the quest to act against injustice in a collaborative manner. While conventional ethnographers tend to speak on behalf of their subjects to empower and give privilege their voices, critical ethnography seeks to modify consciousness and use the knowledge for social change. While conventional ethnographers study culture to understand and describe it, critical ethnographers do so in order to change it. And whereas conventional ethnographers recognize the subjectivity of the researcher, they believe that these biases can be repressed. Critical ethnographers, on the contrary, “instead celebrate their normative and political position as a means of invoking social consciousness and societal change” (Thomas, ibid, p.4). Following Thomas, Madison (2005) contends that critical ethnography “begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (p.5).

Positionality

Situating myself methodologically as a researcher is central to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) because it impacts how I represent others (Habermas, 1971; Fine, 1994). Michelle Fine outlines 3 positions that were useful to my study: 1)
ventriloquist stance (where the researcher is merely the transmitter of information, attempts to stay invisible, neutral and apolitical), 2) the positionality of voices (where the researcher is present but not addressed, but the voices of the subjects are the primary focus, used to make meaning and oppose dominant discourses); and 3) the activism stance (here, the ethnographer is active agent and takes a clear position in highlighting and countering dominant discourses; is also an advocate for social change and offers alternatives) (Madison, 2005). I suggest that the latter two are not mutually exclusive, and as such, my researcher identities oscillated between the activism and positioning of voices, depending on the situationality. I highlighted the voices of my participants who are experts in their own situations, but I also took an active stance in advocate for change in the social injustices they face and in access to quality education for marginalized communities.

Reflecting on my positionality enabled me to acknowledge my power and privilege, and opens my eyes to the biases that may impact my perspectives of the educators and to counter the social structures that empowered or oppressed them in dynamic ways. This reflection, which Davis (1999; cited in Madison, 2005) describes as “reflexive ethnography” was a process of “turning back” on myself. Following Davis, Madison posits, “when we turn back, we are accountable for our own paradigms, representation and interpretation.” (p. 7). Aware of the critique of critical ethnography for its focus on social change and perceived lack of emphasis on the researcher’s positionality (see for example, Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004; Madison, 2005), I acknowledge my own positionality and situationality and how my research is also
embedded in my auto ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It answers Madison’s rhetorical question. Coming from “a history of colonization and disenfranchisement” (Madison, ibid, p.7) informs my subjectivity. After all, Uganda is more than a space for research; it is my home. As a Ugandan student in a western university - albeit from a different part of the country - with a revolving, dynamic diasporic conception of home (Hall, 1999), I am both an insider and an outsider (Subedi, 2006, 2011); and this could be a source of strength or bias. Reflexive ethnography helps me to turn back to myself while negotiating what Subedi (2006) calls my “halfie researcher’s identity” to ensure it does not cloud the study (Errante, 2000).

Table 3.1 shows how critical ethnography was applied to the study. I used critical ethnographic approach because it was most aligned to: 1) my three months of observations, interviews and continued communication with my subjects, 2) my long sustained living and professional experiences growing up and working in Uganda, 3) my deep involvement in the community, and 4) the quest for emancipatory research.

Research context

The multi-site study was conducted in a district in Northern Uganda, an area that was the epicenter of the insurgency in northern Uganda (Soto, 2009). For purposes of confidentiality, the school will be referred to as Mission Girls’ School. Mission Girls’ School is a girls’ day and boarding school founded in the 1930s by catholic missionaries. Mission Girls’ School has 820 girls, a teacher student ratio of 1:65 and an average of 100-150 students absent on a daily basis. According to the school profile, the aim of the founders was to promote equity by providing educational opportunities for girls low from
and middle class families. Their mission was to liberate women from the perceived cultural biases that confounded women to the private sphere. Guided by a liberal feminist philosophy their vision of northern Uganda, an area hitherto marginalized educationally compared to the rest of Uganda, was a Uganda where women were empowered through education to achieve literacy, professional skills and escape poverty.

Consistent with the historical relationship between education and religion in Uganda (Furley & Watson, 1978; Kaburu & Landauer, 2013; Ssekamwa, 1997), the school was Church founded, but is run by the government in collaboration with the Church. This complex school ownership model conforms to the 1963 Education Act that placed the supervision and regulation of all schools- including private ones- under the aegis of the central government. MGS’ governance structure includes the District Education Office (DEO), Municipal Education Office (MEO), division offices, as well as a School Management Council, the church foundation body and Parent Teacher Association, each with demarcated administrative and oversight roles.

The school caters for students from Primary (Grade) 1 to Primary 7, which is the full primary school cycle. Most of the teachers at the school have extensive teaching experience. The students at the school are predominantly from the Acholi region, although there are a small number from other regions and across the border in Southern Sudan. The school is located in a peri-urban area and has both day and boarding students. Based on the school profile and interviews with various educators at the school, school evidently prides itself for catering for the needs of the girl-children who face more

Although MGS was historically one of the best performing schools in the seventies, the school is now an academically ‘at-risk’ school due to its declining performance in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Mission Girls’ was selected using community nomination (Ladson-Billings, 1995) by my informants who highlighted the school’s historical ties to the region, its focus on girls and its relationship with the church. The building facilities at MGS are in fairly good shape, with a well-kept compound and painted exterior walls, although the library is a cramped room with books lying everywhere, the staff room is dusty with no furniture and the classrooms are too small for students to sit comfortably. The major concerns that the school faces is inadequate funding and demotivated teachers, two inter-related factors that impact the schools’ ability to fulfill its function of providing quality education.

Research Participants

Although I was inevitably aware of the impact of government and international actors in determining educational policy and practice (Vavrus, 2009; Samoff & UNESCO, 1994), my primary focus was on the educators at MGS. First, my primary participants were 12 teachers at MGS as shown in Table 3.2. Eleven out of 12 teachers interviewed had between 6-20 years of experience. I purposely chose teachers of P6-P7, as these are the highest grades and the tendency is to have the best and most experienced teachers teaching those classes. In alignment with the traditional view of science as a predominantly male subject, 6 out of the 10 participants were women, with all but two of
the men teaching science subjects (Science, Mathematics), while the women concentrated in the arts. This was the case despite the fact that some women teachers, such as Amy the dance teacher, had endorsements in science subjects. As is common in school contexts, administrators also taught classes, and so their identities and responses reflect the different roles that the participants played in implementing policy.

Second, in order to triangulate the data and enhance my understanding of the data, I purposely selected secondary participants who were interviewed. Table 3.3 shows a summary of secondary participants and the number of hours spent in the interviews. Secondary participants included district education officials, community elders, and staff from another private primary school, teacher trainers and students helped in the triangulation process. For instance, the district education officers pointed me to policy documents and helped me to make sense of the complexities involved with implementing UPE policy requirements. Community leaders, comprising of mostly women in their 50s-60s helped me understand the aspirations of community members with regard to quality education and post conflict integration. The head teacher of one of the best performing school helped me understand why private schools were outperforming their public school counterparts. The two teacher trainers provided insights on the state of teaching and learning, and the societal and institutional issues that impact teachers’ ability to provide quality education. The students helped me understand their aspirations, how the social injustices affected them and what quality education means to them. Taken together, this multiplicity of sources helped enrich my understanding of the complex nature of social justice, and informed my analysis of the data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role(s)</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Deputy Head Teacher 1, MGS; Head of Disciplinary Committee; P6-7 Mathematics.</td>
<td>FGI- 45minutes</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Head Teacher, MGS.</td>
<td>One to one interview- 35 minutes</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Music Dance and Drama; Senior Woman Teacher</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40 minutes</td>
<td>One to one interview- 45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Social Studies P5</td>
<td>FGI- 45minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Social Studies P7</td>
<td>One to one interview- 43 minutes</td>
<td>Transferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Social Studies P6</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40 minutes</td>
<td>One to one interview- 45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Science P7</td>
<td>FGI- 45 minutes</td>
<td>One to one interview- 48 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Social Studies P6</td>
<td>FGI- 45 minutes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Deputy Head Teacher 1</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40 minutes</td>
<td>Transferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Social Studies (Religion) P6</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>One to one interview- 38 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive</td>
<td>Head of English Department; English Teacher P7</td>
<td>FGI- 45 minutes</td>
<td>One to one interview- 43 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Science Teacher</td>
<td>FGI- 45 minutes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of interview hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>767 minutes</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Primary participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role (s)</th>
<th>2012 - Interview 1</th>
<th>2013- Interview 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Municipality Education Officer in charge of Inspection</td>
<td>Interview One to one interview- 43 minutes</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denis</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40 minutes</td>
<td>Phone interview- 25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Teacher Trainer/CCT</td>
<td>Phone interview- 45 minutes</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Head of Private School</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40 minutes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>Assistant Principal of Teachers’ College; Teacher Educator</td>
<td>One to one interview- 40 minutes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student A, B, C, D &amp; E</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>FGI- 40 minutes</td>
<td>FGI- 40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders A, B, C, S</td>
<td>Community elders</td>
<td>FGI- 40 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3. Secondary participants

Instruments for Data Collection

Several instruments and recording processes were used in the data collection process. These included interviews, classroom observation field notes, documents and pictures.

Table 3.4 shows how the instruments were used to answer the research questions. Next, I explain my use of the instruments will be discussed in more detail.

Interviews

Narrative interviews were conducted with primary participants. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes to 48 minutes, as shown on Table 3.2 and 3.3. Most of the interviews were one-to-one, although Focus Group Interviews were help in 3 instances. For teachers,
the first focus group was held in 2012 because they requested it, perhaps due to their initial suspicion about my intentions. The second FGI was held with students, while the third was held with community elders (predominantly women) in the local language. One interview was conducted on the phone due to time constraints for the participant. I simultaneously took observation notes and audio recordings, which have been transcribed for analysis. Additional follow-ups are being conducted on the phone or through word of mouth.

The interview protocol was foregrounded by prior literature (Scrase, 1997; Tyson & Park, 2006; Park, 2009; Lewin & Sabates, 2012; UNESCO, 2012), and consistent with the narrative inquiry approach (Czarniawska, 2004; Connelly & Claudinin, 2006; Aguinis, Werner, Abott, Angert, Park, & Kohlhansen, 2010). To that end, the research questions were used not as a priori interview protocol, but as a guide to beginning the conversation.

Classroom Observations

I conducted classroom observations to understand the connection between teacher’s perceptions of social justice and their application of social justice teaching in their classroom practices. My classroom observations (Bloome, Puro & Theodorou, 1989; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1985) focused on classroom pedagogical practices, such as the use of learning aids, teaching styles, use of inquiry, hands-on activities, how content is linked to real-world context, cooperative learning, grouping dynamics, tracking and validation of student thinking. I observed classroom social ethos such as sharing, problem solving and respect for differences, discussion of controversial issues, how discrimination
was challenged and social agency for reconciliation is framed. I also paid attention to the ways in which inter-textual connections were made as well as how social justice is (in)visible in the classroom contexts as well as how government policies on education are implemented in the classrooms (Tyson & Park, 2006). In addition to classroom learning activities, I was welcomed to non-class activities like assemblies and performing arts rehearsals.

Documents

As shown on Table 3.4, I collected documents such to better understand the UPE policies and practices, application and perceptions about social justice, quality education, as well as progress reports and analyses on education. Examples of documents collected included the Government of Uganda White Paper on Education, syllabi, sectorial reports, statistical abstracts on primary education as well as quality education indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: How do educators perceive social justice?</td>
<td>Interviews, observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: How do the educators apply social justice in their classroom pedagogical practices in the quest to provide quality education?</td>
<td>Interviews, observations, document collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4. Data sources

Procedures Used

This multi-site study is being conducted in a district in Northern Uganda, an area that was the epicenter of a two-decade insurgency in northern Uganda (Soto, 2009). My
interest in the research context was ignited after reading data that show that the northern region is still grappling with lack of access to quality education based on the quality education indicators (MOFPED, 2010; MOES, 2003), a situation exacerbating by chronic and intergenerational poverty and war (Bird, Higgins and McKay, 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Update</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2012</td>
<td>● Proposal writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2012</td>
<td>● Mershon Grant Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June – July 2012</td>
<td>● Travel to Uganda. Conducted interviews, field observations, document collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Preliminary analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2012 - April 2013</td>
<td>● Continued remote communication with research subjects/data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2013</td>
<td>● Proposal Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May – July 2013</td>
<td>● Travel to Uganda. Second round of interviews, field observations and document collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July – December 2013</td>
<td>● Continued follow-up interviews and communication; data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2013-April 2013</td>
<td>● Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Writing the findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5. Study Timeline

This research study required a series of steps, right from conceptualization to data analysis. First, I used my contacts in the region to gather information about costs, logistics and possibilities. This information was used in designing the research study and a drawing up a budget, which was partly funded by the Mershon Center for International Security Studies and The Department of Teaching and Learning and The Ohio State University. As shown on Table 3.5, I visited the northern Uganda in 2012 and immersed
myself in the community. I conducted interviews and classroom observations field as well as collecting documents pertaining to the UPE system.

Second, I applied for, and obtained IRB approval to conduct the study. Part of the requirements for IRB approval involved obtaining written permission to conduct research in schools, which was granted by the District Education Official with the help from my contacts (see in appendix A). Next, I travelled to Northern Uganda and visited local schools in the area and spoke to the administrators. My local contacts also got me in touch with Mr. Andrew (pseudonym), a senior teacher at Mission Girls’ School. With his help, I was able to meet the head teacher at MGS. The Head teacher was welcoming and beckoned me to ‘feel at home.’ She was glad to hear that I was a Ugandan student doing research in a Ugandan school, and was pleased to know that I understood the local Luo dialect, even though I was not fluent at it. She introduced me to the teachers and politely asked them to welcome me into their classrooms and into their lives.

Next, I approached the teachers through face-to-face interaction, and scheduled the interviews by word of mouth and followed with phone calls. In addition to getting authorization to work with teachers, I requested teachers for permission to enter their classrooms and carry out observations as well as to interview them for 30-45 minutes. All the 12 teachers I spoke to agreed. This was partly due to the rapport I was able to create with them by spending time with them in the teacher lounge and answering their questions. These interactions were useful as it allowed us to know each other and banished the suspicions they had about my intentions. I particularly selected teachers in the higher grades (P5-P7) because those classes are preparing to take the PLE
examinations and transition into secondary or vocational school. In an oral culture like
this one, signing documents is treated suspiciously. I was pleased that my participants
signed the consent forms without any hiccups.

After interviewing some teachers, I also requested for permission to conduct a focus
group interview with 6 diverse students. I particularly requested that they have diverse
ability groups. The teachers nominated 6 P6 students. Although the school gave the
student consent (this is culturally appropriate since parents give the mandate to the
schools), students still gave their assent to take part in the study. I chose P6 so as to be
able to carry out follow-up interviews in 2013.

Validity

Validity of this research study was negotiated in the following ways. First, I created
rapport with the participants. My understanding of the cultural nuances enabled me to
negotiate the intricate culturally appropriate norms and values without offending my
participants. For instance, part of taking research at the school involved sharing the
school lunches, which were served to students and teachers. And while I struggled with
the poor quality of food, it was rude to reject it. Secondly, most teachers were older than
myself, and as culturally expected and socially required, the relationship was of student
to teacher, and part of manifesting the respectful attitude included me referring to them as
“sir,” “madam” and even “master,” much the same way their students would. My
researcher identity therefore oscillated between researcher, learner, teacher, prober,
advocate...depending on the situation. Second, I employed a system of member checks to
carry out follow-up interviews in 2013.

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myself, and as culturally expected and socially required, the relationship was of student
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“sir,” “madam” and even “master,” much the same way their students would. My
researcher identity therefore oscillated between researcher, learner, teacher, prober,
advocate...depending on the situation. Second, I employed a system of member checks to
ensure the voices of the participants were not misrepresented. However, my intention to
conduct a member check with all participants has not been possible due to communication constraints (many do not have email). Third, I triangulated by using multiple data sources and instruments. Lastly, I kept a researcher journal. Lastly, I kept a researcher reflection journal to reflect on my findings and record my anxieties and frustrations. This reflection journal helped me focus on the research.

Data Analysis

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), while data are “the constructions offered by or in the sources; data analysis leads to a reconstruction of those constructions” (p.332). Coding “allows you to recall the extra-ordinary complex range of stimuli with which you have been bombarded (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; cited in Madison, 2005, p.36). According to Glesne (1999) selecting and sorting into “code clumps” helps create an organizational format. Carspecken (1996) takes this further by suggesting that while grouping is important, coding needs to go beyond organizational grouping to coding while analyzing (Madison, 2005); where themes emerge from the codes and guide the analysis process. To this end, this study employed Auerbach and Silverstein’s (2003) data analysis approach. Auerbach and Silverstein describe their coding approach using the metaphor of a staircase. “You can think of the steps of coding as a staircase, moving you from a lower to a higher (more abstract) level of understanding. The lowest level is the raw text and the highest level is your research concerns” (p.35). Further, they argue that there is no such thing as coding the one “right way” especially in qualitative research studies where researcher subjectivity is unquestionable. This relieved any anxieties I harbored initially.
As illustrated on Tables 3.6 and 3.7, my coding approach started with the raw text, from which relevant text were selected. Next, the relevant texts were categorized into repeating ideas, which were developed into common themes. The themes were then organized into larger and more abstract ideas, also called theoretical constructs. Finally, the theoretical abstracts were summarized into what was learned about the research concerns. And while my coding process was not linear, I was able to use the theoretical to bridge my research concerns and those of my participants. For instance, I initially wanted to know how teachers perceived social justice and how this impacted their teaching and learning approaches. However, educators continuously spoke about the lack of quality education, and how religion was important to how they navigate the injustices they faced. I realized that: 1) any discussion of social justice and education needs to include the overall conversation about quality education, which became part of the second research question, 2) that religion was not just a private spiritual endeavor, but clearly embedded within the school practices and policies, and so spiritual guidance became part of the counseling and guidance practices as well as a source of resilience for those facing social injustice at the societal, professional and classroom levels (Kaburu & Landauer, 2013). Staying with Auerbach and Silverstein’s use of metaphors, their coding approach enabled me to move from the feeling of being “adrift in a sea of data” (p.32) to ”swimming to the shore” (p.35). For those participant concerns that I was not able to “bridge” within my concerns, such as citizenship and gender, I intend to pursue them as future research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Repeating ideas</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Theoretical Constructs</th>
<th>Theoretical Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Q1: How do educators perceive social justice? | • War  
• Violence  
• Suicides  
• Alcohol abuse  
• Lack of economic opportunities  
• School drop outs  
• Lack of quality education  
• Land conflicts  
• Abductions and death | • Poverty and conflict  
• Trauma  
• Dysfunctional families  
• Domestic violence  
• Sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS |  |
| | • Poor teacher pay  
• Low motivation  
• Poor training  
• Lack of teaching resources  
• Focus on academic subjects  
• Lack of housing | • Poor remuneration  
• Teaching as survival  
• Teaching as a last resort  
• underfunding  
• Impositions from above | Societal level |
| | • Over-crowded classrooms  
• Drill and practice  
• Too much testing  
• Lower level knowledge  
• Lack of student engagement  
• Poor academic achievement  
• Finishing the syllabus  
• Neglect of non-academic subjects  
• Students not paying attention | • High teacher-student ratios  
• Teacher-centered approaches  
• Teaching to the test  
• Over-teaching | Professional level |
| | | | Social justice as dialectical and multifaceted |

Table 3.6. Coding of Research Question 1
Table 3.7. Coding of Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourses</th>
<th>Application of social justice as nuanced and complex; and impacted by the social and material conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Religion as the source of social justice</td>
<td>● Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Moral cultural values</td>
<td>● Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Learner engaged approaches</td>
<td>● Spiritual and moral counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Respect</td>
<td>● Corporal punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Dignity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Love for one another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Pride in community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Helping the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2: How do the educators apply social justice in their classroom pedagogical practices in the quest to provide quality education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourses</th>
<th>Application of social justice as nuanced and complex; and impacted by the social and material conditions</th>
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<td>● Care</td>
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<td>● Talking to the student</td>
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<td>● Treating the student as ‘my’ own children</td>
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I coded the data manually and electronically. First, the preliminary coding was done manually during the first phase of transcriptions in order to familiarize myself with the data and participants. This process involved a graphic representation of the coding clumps, which were organized into themes. I also used the Deedose electronic software...
for categorizing and simplifying the sorting process. Second, I coded the data analytically to answer my research questions.

Summary of the Methodology

To summarize this chapter, it should be emphasized that this study of teacher perceptions and practices of social justice pedagogy at MGS employed critical ethnography as a research methodology and grounded the research components in a critical theoretical frame due to its grounded, reflexive, constructivist and social justice orientation. Data sources included interviews that were triangulated with observations and documents. The findings of the study are discussed in the next chapter. This will be followed by a discussion of the findings, their implications for policy and practice as well as further research in the last chapter.
Chapter 4: Findings

We need to liberate these schools from examinations and liberate people from thinking that it's examinations that matter. I don't really know how that can be done (Peter).

My findings show that teaching for educators at Mission Girls School is a daily struggle for survival. The low remuneration and facilitation makes it difficult for teachers to provide quality instruction. This is exacerbated by the over-reliance on examinations (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006) by parents, community leaders and even public policy manuals as evidence of learning—such as the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). And while examinations are useful in assessing, sorting and accountability, they can also be detrimental to quality education and social justice. Moreover, quality is compromised when teaching and learning is reduced to test-prep, and social justice is negated for students whose access to quality instruction and resources are ignored, skewing the results in favor of those with a relatively good socio-economic status. Peter, a teacher trainer suggests in the excerpt above that there is need to shift the focus away from examinations for initiatives to quality education and social justice to be effective. As
will be discussed later, scholars in international comparative education share this view (Alexander, 2006; Tikly & Dachi, 2009; Vavrus, 2006).

This study employs the critical theoretical framework as a method and a frame of analysis in examining the educators’ onto-epistemological understandings and applications of social justice. In the previous chapter, I elucidated the methodological approaches used to carry out this qualitative study, with a particular focus on data analysis. This chapter is organized in terms of the two specific research questions posed in chapter 1. It first reports on the educators’ perceptions of social justice; it then examines how they apply those beliefs in their pedagogical practices in the quest to provide quality education.

Q1: Teachers’ perceptions of social justice

As stated in Chapter 3, I researched primarily with primary school teachers at Mission Girls’ School, an all-girls’ school founded by a Christian foundation but run as a public school. The school is located in a peri-urban area in northern Uganda, a region navigating post conflict reconciliation and reconstruction after over two decades of civil war. Although these 12 educators were the primary sources of data, the study was three-tiered for triangulation purposes. To this end, classroom observations and interviews with teachers were triangulated with interviews with district education officials, teacher educators and students. In addition, interviews were held with community members and employees of NGOs involved in education and triangulated with content analysis of documents such as the Whitepapers and sectorial reports on education.
In Chapter 1, I cited literature that critique discourses on education for often leaving out the voices of teachers who are important actors at the frontline of teaching and learning (Park, 2009; Vavrus, 2006). To this end, this dissertation study relied primarily on narratives, but also employed observation field notes and content analysis to privilege teacher voices.

There key theoretical narrative emanating from participants’ perceptions of social justice was social justice as dialectical and multifaceted. Rather than approach social justice with an idealized approach, participants understood it based on concrete experiences with social (in)justice (Park, 2008). In addition, teacher’s perceptions of social justice were mediated by the social and material conditions in which they lived and worked (Vavrus, 2009). Key to these conditions was a history of political marginalization originating with colonialism, chronic and intergenerational poverty that was further exacerbated by over two decades of civil war (Bird, Higgins and McKay, 2004), which caused violence and displacement. I categorize these grounded perceptions of injustices into three overlapping spheres: societal, professional, classroom. While the injustices are connected, differentiating them according to the spheres enables a proper deconstruction of social justice’s multifaceted and complicated form.

First, social justice at the societal level focused on issues that constrained their community as a whole and negated their ability to achieve their full potential. As a region negotiating post conflict after nearly two decades of civil war, emerging themes included: poverty and conflict; trauma; domestic violence; dysfunctional families; and sexual abuse and HIV. Second, at the professional level, their narratives focused on constraints they
faced as educators in their quest to provide quality education, but also be able to provide for themselves and their families. Based on their lived experiences, teachers noted the ubiquitous experiences of powerless and privilege that impacted their ability to teach effectively. Emerging themes included poor remuneration; teaching as survival; teaching as a last resort; underfunding, and impositions from ‘above.’ Lastly, at the classroom level, participants centered their perceptions on the students and how the injustices at the societal and professional levels directly negate student learning and academic success, and these included high teacher-student ratios; teacher-centered approaches; teaching to the test; and over-teaching.

In sum, the findings of this study provide evidence that there were connections between social (in)justice to the wider issues of governance; as such social justice needs to be situated within its historical and cultural context. For the participants of this study, they situated social justice within the collective realm. Although the individual’s experiences with injustice were important, the needs and experiences of the societal were evidently primary. Finally, educators perceived social justice as access to equal opportunity. Emphasizing an economic redistributive framework with education as a means towards social justice and economic mobility, teacher narratives presented a paradox. While most participants emphasized the centrality of good performance in examinations as a measure of quality education, for others it was also a source of injustice, as expressed by Peter in the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter. In what follows, I delve into these issues with more detail.
Social injustices at the societal level

Educators used their narratives to reflect on the structural and institutional injustices at the societal level that impacted them both as individuals and group members. These included poverty, trauma, dysfunctional families, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS.

Poverty and conflicts over resources

Participant perspectives of social injustice focused on poverty. They reflected upon the ways in which they were oppressed and marginalized economically, and how access to economic opportunities was structurally and institutionally skewed against them. Specifically, they made the connection between socio-economic status and access to quality education, and the intersection between poverty and other factors such as gender, rurality and religion, as revealed in the following excerpts:

The child's performance depends on their family background because like we are here now, some families are able to send their children to nursery school and then take them to join good primary schools which they can afford to pay and because of that you find that the child will be able to do well, but sometimes you find a parent who is poor and cannot afford to take a child to nursery school, and this is difficult (Andrew).

And for some of our children school fees is a big problem for their parents because they're all orphans and some may only have their mothers because the father is not there. And the mother is also not a working-class, and providing food alone in the home is a problem, so we have a lot of challenges (Amy)

Andrew suggests that access to early childhood education is heavily dependent on socio-economic status since it is still privately funded in Uganda. Amy, on the other hand, extends the debate to include the plight of orphans who face additional roadblocks due
accruing from having child-headed and single-parent-led households. Andrew also raises the issue of access to early childhood education which vulnerable populations are unlikely to benefit from, resulting economically privileged children having a head start while those from poor households play catch-up during the early stages of elementary school. There is government consensus that early childhood education plays a critical role in child cognitive development (Ministry of Education & Sports, 2004), especially in reading, but for families for whom putting food on the table is a daily struggle, paying for early childhood education is a luxury and so those resources are allocated to more pressing needs, skewing student access and performance.

This inequity of access to quality education based on socio-economic status, among other indicators, is consistent with data on education in the Sub Saharan Africa, a region with more than half the world’s total number of out of school children (Lewin & Sabates, 2012; Moyi, 2012; Tikly & Dachi, 2009; Population Secretariat Uganda, 2012; UNESCO, 2012;). Lewin’s study (2011) found that “social justice issues in education in Africa are multi-layered ...[and] over determined by the realities of poverty and inequality on the continent and by Africa’s worsening position in relation to the global economy” (ibid, p.131). And while gender, culture, educational level of mother, residence, level of political stability and religion matter, their intersection with household wealth is more critical in determining access to quality healthcare and education. Lewin argues that any evaluation of education in Sub Saharan Africa must extend beyond the current emphasis of effectiveness, cost and statistical data to focus on quality:
Not only should all children participate in a full cycle of basic education, but their opportunities to learn and benefit should also be equitably distributed. Participation alone is not sufficient to realize a right to education if what is on offer is highly unequal in quality, effectiveness, and cost (p.337).

Economist Amartya Sen (1999), like Lewin, suggests that access to quality education and health services, rather than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a more effective framework for determining economic growth. Sen argues that what needs equalizing are not the resources, but the human capabilities, defined as the freedom and agency to determine and choose from a range of possible options, or simply, “what people are to be and to do” the things they consider valuable (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007; p.3). Using this framework, we can infer based on the interviews with participant narratives that there is consensus that the schools such as MGS are not providing the required quality of education that will enable students to overcome their constraints and achieve their capabilities, their potential.

Aligned with poverty is the struggle for resources. Participants situated poverty in narratives of war and deprivations, but they also spoke about the need for reparations as a social justice issue. For some of my participants, compensation for those who had suffered the effects of war atrocities as well as those who lost their cattle, which were looted by the government in the past, was a priority measure for poverty eradication. They also talked about struggles over land, which as David contends, is the new “struggle” in Northern Uganda:

I have seen that people have been struggling as a consequence of their animals, which were taken by the government, but now people want those animals to be
refunded through compensatory payments. Also, in this region of ours there is a lot more poverty compared to the other regions because there is little money here and because of the war that we experienced for the last 25 years so we are still growing economically. Our status is still very bad although within the municipality some people are staying well, but when you go into the villages there are big problems even though there is agriculture. People are trying but we're not there yet because they are using local/rudimentary implements for farming activities, which cannot be enough (Fred).

Fred alludes to the culturally intimate connection that people in the Uganda have historically had with their land (Esuruku, 2011; Onegi, 2012). Land has recently become a social justice issue closely connected to social and economic livelihood, and specifically with the ability to afford good quality because of the affordances to cultivate, rent, sell or conduct business in it and pay school fees. As such, land is both a means to an end, but also an end in itself as Fred explains:

People have now seen the benefits of land and that is why there are land wrangles. Somebody was given land and now you want to remove him...you want them to move away from that land. People want to sell land to get money because they have seen its financial benefits. Even investors are also now coming. The local people are resisting- like the case with the sugar manufacturer; there is a problem because people don't want to give him their land. Land is now the new wealth because we no longer have animals. So the desire to benefit from their land so much that you may need to send your friend or relative away which is not good. So the issue is a serious one here. But we need land reforms. That is one problem I also see in our community (Fred).

The struggle over resources such as land is both a result of the conflict that destroyed the region’s economic base, as well as its root cause (Esuruku, 2011; Onegi, 2012), and as Fred suggests, it has created a wage between friends and relatives. There is massive sale of land, especially by the poor who are selling previously communally owned land in the
quest to get money as well as the rampant land grabbing mainly by well-connected individuals with impunity has prompted a national uproar and especially in northern Uganda where previously displaced people are returning to vast fertile lands. Fred recommends “land reforms” to quell this new struggle that has also been labeled the new war in northern Uganda. There is a close connection between land and education. As a source of wealth, land is a resource for production of food for nutrition, to cover the extra costs of education as well as for social and economic mobility. The sooner the land conflicts can be resolved, the quicker more people will be able to use their resources to provide quality education and health to their children.

*Experiences of trauma and resilience*

Participants situated civil war within the social injustices they faced at the societal and individual level. Years of violence left many, especially children, vulnerable to the effects of war.

The war affected girls more than the boys of course. You know girls are the weaker sex. Those rebels where taking young girls at the age of 15, 16 even 10 to be their official wives so girls feared to come to school because they were being abducted. How can you go to school where you can be abducted? Why? You need to stay at home and find your own way to survive. Coming to school, you could even be raped. So they feared many of them could not come out of their homes. So the war was not good on the girls. The boys could walk and move around and could escape but the girls could not even run if attacked. That is why in the past, few girls were completing primary school, but nowadays they are in most cases the number of girls is to that of boys in this sub region (Andrew).

It is interesting that Andrew uses the phrase “weaker sex” which is highly charged and controversial in the context of the global movements for gender equality. Similar to the
findings of Reed & Oppong’s (2005) study of mathematics teachers and equity, Andrew’s reference to girls as the ‘weaker sex’ implies a) the vulnerability of women during conflict, and/or b) a sense of inferiority of girls and women in comparison with men (Annan, Blattman, Mazurana & Carlson, 2011). While the former is plausible, the latter view contradicts the mission of the school that seeks to empower girls to become successful members of the societal, and reifies a history of subjugation of women (Lather, 1998, 2004).

Participants spoke about how the social injustices as a result of the war impacted them at a personal level. Amy shared Andrew’s perceptions in her experiences of being abducted:

First of all before I was even abducted I had to stay at home...for at least 4 years...because there was a lot of insurgency such that in our villages the schools were not operating, so I was forced to stay home all the time hiding and sleeping in the bush and the rain (Amy).

The two-decade war between the Lords Resistance (LRA) rebels and the Ugandan government disrupted communities and left an environment of anarchy, where the security of persons and property was no longer guaranteed. The United Nations (UNOCHA, 2003) estimates that 10,000 children were abducted in northern Uganda in 2002 alone and the number of displaced people rose from 800,000 in 2002 to 1.2 million in 2003, while between 4000 - 5000 children (also known as "night commuters") trekked daily for long distances to and from urban areas for shelter. In addition, the lack of security made it challenging for provision and coordination of humanitarian assistance.
So catastrophic was the war on the local population, and especially the children and women (Annan, Blattman, Mazurana & Carlson, 2011) that the UN undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs, Jan Egeland called it "one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world" during his visits to the region. This predicament is better explained by the African proverb about how it is the grass that suffers when two elephants fight.

And while it would be intellectually disempowering to assume that the people of Northern Uganda were passive victims of war, the *wanainchi* (common folk) were vulnerable to attacks from both the government and rebels. Amy, for example, talks about being abducted by the rebels at a young age, missing her family and school:

> They [the rebels] abducted me when I was still 14 and I stayed there [in the bush] for 8 months. Then I escaped from them but I was with other people who were not my people for 3 months. In total I stayed away from my parents for at least a year. And it was really the most painful moment that I've ever had in my life. So the war has caused a lot of pain in my life, a lot of trauma… retardation in my studies. ...We kept on changing our place of residence and yet we did not even have a tent. The rain beat us seriously in those days. I went through a very painful experience. One of them that I can still remember vividly up to now, there was a day when they accused me of trying to escape and yet I had gone for a short call. When I came back on the line in which we were moving-- they just moved like that from day and night, there wasn't much sleep. That day, the way they beat me was very serious. I was almost unconscious, but due to God's mercy, one of them injected me with PPF and penicillin. That is when I started feeling like my chest was opening. I was almost dying. Then a friend of mine put hot water and bathed me with it seriously. Then we started moving. So I got a very painful moment in my life (Amy).

However, Amy’s narrative of pain and injustice also had moments of resilience. She spoke about finally being able to overcome the psychological trauma and triumph over these challenges:
...when I came back, I resumed my studies. I repeated P6, went to P7” and scored 13 aggregates, which is a 2nd grade. I went to high school straightaway where I took 4 years and then went straight to the core Primary Teachers’ College (PTC). That is where I finished my teaching professional training in 2000. Much as I have suffered a lot, I thank God because after returning from the bush I came back and resumed my studies and successfully finished and joined the marriage institution, and as I talk now I have 3 children (Amy).

Amy’s ability to overcome these traumas was aided by her reliance on spiritual guidance and counseling as well as community support. Spiritual support was crucial because it enabled her as a victim to see beyond her trials and have hope for the future. Counseling enabled her to overcome the trauma and channel the anger into resilience. She takes pride in being able to contribute to her community through teaching. For Amy, teaching is also therapeutic because it provides her with an opportunity to engage in something she loves-teaching music.

Sometimes even if I come from home when I am not happy, the moment I enter in the class and see all these children, I begin to feel very happy. I really love children. I see them as innocent people. They're just very innocent and normally I put it in my mind that whatever wrongs they are doing, they just doing it innocently. That is what has entered so deeply into my mind. I don't know with other teachers. So I just love the children and feel that if you are together with them, you are just free. There is nothing wrong. We interact, talk and do a lot of things-and those kinds of things make someone to relax. That love towards the children makes me very happy the moment I see them. Even for them the moment they see me they are just okay. Sometimes they even welcome me into the class. Even if you have any problems you begin to just feel at home. And if they don't behave themselves I put them back in line. Yes. Immediately. Immediately. I would also not love to see anybody misbehaving (Amy).
Amy’s predicament is similar to the experiences faced by marginalized groups in war zones. It appears that education played a role in enhancing her resilience. This is consistent with literature on education and resilience. A study carried out in 13 districts in northern Uganda (fieldwork plus data analysis) by Bird, Higgins and McKay (2004) found that: 1) conflict and insecurity impacted civilians and their livelihoods and caused chronic and intergenerational poverty, a result of people being chronically poor and deprived over a sustained period of time passed down from generation to generation (Bird, 2003; cited in Bird et al., ibid). In addition, they found that educated supported resilience in post-conflict settings by protecting students from sliding into poverty and limiting their vulnerability to chronic and intergenerational poverty. Education afforded students opportunities to draw on social networks, trade, and travel, engage with leaders and take leadership positions.

And while Amy is a positive story, not all victims have a happy ending. Peter, a teacher educator makes connections between psychological trauma, risky behavior and suicide rates in the community:

In this society the major challenge has been, one, suicide. Suicide is very common here. ...There is a sub county... just after the municipality. In that sub county alone, within a year, about 29 people committed suicide... That is A LOT. Most people at the local level believe that the reason why they are committing suicide is because of excessive drinking. But ... they also believe that there is a spirit of suicide. They have actually tried to use their local leaders to drive away those spirits [laughing] using the local cultural methods, but it is still persisting. So people are committing suicide after taking alcohol. ...Yes! People are committing suicide at a very fast rate. Young men, old man, women, like that. Picking a quarrel with her husband, suicide! (Peter).

He continues:
I think this is a result of trauma. People got traumatized during the war and so that trauma is causing them to behave in such a manner that even the slightest thing can cause somebody to become angry and the reason for drinking is only to get courage to commit suicide [laughter] (Peter).

Data on suicide rates in Northern Uganda support these claims. Although suicide is a felony under Ugandan law\(^1\), suicide rates in Northern Uganda are significantly high compared to other regions of the country (Kizza, 2011; Kizza, Hjelmeland, Kinyanda, & Knizek, 2012; Uganda Radio Network, 2012; Wendo, 2007). The Uganda Radio Network (2011) reports that Gulu District authorities reported 22 suicide cases in October 2011, with 15 cases reported in Koro sub country alone, while 51 cases were reported between December 2012 and February 2013 (Monitor, 2013). It is possible that poverty and recklessness has led to the increase in suicide rates. However, there is consensus that increased alcohol consumption has a causal effect on suicide rates (Kizza, 2011; Kizza, Hjelmeland, Kinyanda, & Knizek, 2012; Rossow, 2005). Consistent with a World Health Organization report, (2004) which found that Uganda’s annual alcohol consumption per capita was the highest in the world, a research study of bereaved relatives and friends of 20 suicide victims (Kizza et al., 2012) found that alcohol had both a direct and indirect influence on suicidal death in 16 out of the 20 descendants sampled. Kizza et al suggest that the war and alcohol abuse influenced the lifestyle of descendants by lowering their ability to tolerate stress. This was further exacerbated by post war trauma and the disempowerment of men from their traditional roles. The lifestyle in Internally Displaced

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\(^1\) According to the code, anyone who attempts to commit suicide is liable to 2 years of imprisonment (Kizza, Hjelmeland, Kinyanda, & Knizek, 2011)
Peoples (IDP) camps disempowered men due to their dependence on humanitarian aid that left them idle and robbed them of their dignity and social value. Consequently, they lost their traditional role as household heads and producers of wealth, causing increased rates of tension at the family level Alcohol abuse, domestic violence, spread of HIV/AIDS and suicide rates (Harlacher, Okot, Obonyo, Balthazard, & Atkinson, 2006; Kizza et al, 2012). Although the sample size was small, it is very likely that alcohol abuse, poverty and post war trauma intersect to cause suicide.

Experiences with dysfunctional families

Participants shared negative experiences of growing up in fractured families. These shared experiences included growing up with step-parents and being denied the love and opportunities that they deserved, or access to better quality schools. Although most participants mentioned stepmothers, others, like Andrew spoke about how his parents gave more privileges to his older siblings who were in high school, and how these experiences had affected his self-esteem. For my participants, a separation or divorce by parents was a game changer. Take for instance:

My father and my mother where related. And you know that in our cultures, when you get into contact with your relatives, you are not allowed to stay together. And I was the first elder boy in the family, so they decided to just separate them so that they did not stay together. So I got a stepmother, and I stayed with my stepmother and my dad and she kept me well, but unfortunately even though I'm not supposed to say it here, she was sometimes biased. She never wanted me to go far with my studies. So I struggled alone (Andrew).

From my primary one to primary 7, life was good because I was with my mother, but as you know human beings, I don't know what took place, my parents separated when I was in senior one. Then life became difficult and I had to live with the stepmother. Not all stepmothers are bad. Some are good, but most are terrible. My stepmother ... was not easy. It was just because I was a strong girl that I was able to succeed in education (Olive).
Olive was tactical in resisting traditional cultural values that are skewed against the women. While her former husband could live alone and date whomever he wanted, Olive was aware of the stigma attached to women living alone despite their age. Conservative cultural norms and values still blame the women if the marriages break down irrespective of the debilitating causes, such as violence and abuse, as Olive continues:

I was taken back home in the name of paying my dowry and he instead got another girl and started staying with her. So for me I was safe. I stayed home for one year and even lived with my uncle because I didn't want to rent a house. If you are a working class and you are renting, people take you a different perspective… Either you are a prostitute, or what have you…. so I decided to live with my uncle until I got this 2nd man and introduced him to my parents. The very day I introduced him to my parents, he said he should be given permission to marry me and in 2010, he paid my dowry and now we're planning for the church marriage. So I am happy…at least (Olive).

Olive’s predicament reflects the extra burdens of expectations placed on women of color in collectivist settings. Her skillful and intentional approach in negotiating social norms that impact her as a woman are contrary to mainstream discourses and colonizing perspectives that often present women of color as passive beings (Kaomea, 2006; Noble, 2008). That she was able to uplift her economic conditions and provide her daughter with good education speaks to the resilience of women in the so-called “third world” but also gives hope to social movements for equity and social justice.
Experiences with domestic violence

Participants also spoke about their experience with domestic violence as a social injustice issue. Some experienced violence from their boyfriends or husbands. For example, Olive:

I was married to a medical person. I had a girl who is now in P6. Unfortunately this was a man who was jumping here and there with ladies, and beating me. You can even see [showing me scars on her hands and neck] even these cars were all a result of the beatings I endured. So I couldn’t continue with that kind of life. So I told my mother that I cannot just live with this man like this, you come and remove me from this man officially so even the public can see it in a different way not to see me as this prostitute or what have you (Olive).

Olive’s experiences with trauma are consistent with data on domestic violence in northern Uganda. According to the Uganda Demographic Health Survey report (Uganda Bureau of Statistics & ICF International Inc., 2012), women in northern Uganda were more likely to experience physical or sexual violence from men from the age of 15 than women in other regions. The report also found that most of the violence on married women is perpetrated by current husband/partner (55.4%), former husband/partner (17.7%) or stranger (12.3%), while for unmarried women, the violence was most likely to be committed by a stranger (29.3%), own friend or acquaintance (18.1%), other relative (15%) or current/former boyfriend (9.6%). These findings paint a picture of a society where the abuse of women is common, but also of a society where life in what became known as Internally Displaced Peoples’ (IDP) camps disrupted the traditional social structures and further disenfranchised men and husband roles as “providers” (Kizza, Hjelmeland, Kinyanda, & Knizek, 2011).
Vulnerability to sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS

Educators talked about the powerlessness of women and girls, and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS as social justice issues impacting members of this community. Vulnerability to rape, defilement and early marriages were common themes in educator narratives, as shown below:

In the community, girls always face this injustice of rape. There are a lot of rape cases because many people are now abusing drugs like marijuana in our community here and when you move in the evening alone as a girl you can be raped. They are also being seduced by sugar daddies within this community and [also] young girls want money and for those who want money sugar daddies will come. Some of them can even get infected with HIV. Life within Uganda and within this community is becoming difficult and girls are facing a lot of problems because parents alone cannot provide basic needs for the girls. When you go to the town center, some of them are even selling their bodies. Immorality is within the towns because of lack of money. People are facing problems in the community because of money issues. They want to get money to buy their basic needs from their parents, but some cannot do so, so they need to move around (Fred).

Last year there was a case we got. A certain big man raped a girl from here. We have those types of sexual harassment. The other problem is that many parents are not able to provide for their children the basic needs for the girls and that is making some overall girls to begin looking outside for these needs and they get problems outside. Some of them are being infected with sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV because of the love for these material things, especially from those big big people. We call them sugar daddies (Amy).

Yes, when the students reach a stage where their parents or guardians cannot pay for them to come to school, they are forced to go for early marriages. You know this is a girls school, and when the girls are not well taken care of, they find themselves thinking about finding a partner to keep me as a girl, but unfortunately sometimes this gets them into early marriages which is not good (Andrew).
For students at MGS, sexual abuse and early marriages are a real danger to their continued stay in school as well as their long-term well being. The notices scattered in the school compound (on Figure 4.1) are indicative of the severity of these concerns.

Figure 4.1. Posters at MGS

Educators made connections between poverty, sexual abuse and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. As girls and women of low socio-economic status, students and staff were more vulnerable to sexual and domestic violence and HIV/AIDS than men. These findings are consistent with the Ministry of Education Statistical Report (2011) data that shows that of the estimated that 1.2 million people are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus in Uganda, 150,000 are children under the age of 18. The report further shows that in terms of HIV/AIDS prevalence, Northern Uganda has the third largest number of primary
school pupils (10,382), second highest among teachers (799) and fourth among non-teaching staff (179) compared to the six other regions of Uganda.\(^2\) HIV/AIDS results in poor health, attrition and has negative consequences for primary education. Although Uganda was once acclaimed as a successful HIV/AIDS story, the increasing spread of the epidemic has alarmed government and NGO partners. Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) the government of Uganda launched the Presidential Initiative on Aids Strategies for Communication with Youth (PIASCY), program to prioritize primary school sensitization projects to help spread information on HIV/AIDS prevention, and to prevent stigma against those afflicted with the virus (Ministry of Education & Sports, 2011; Population Secretariat Uganda & United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA, 2011).

Social injustices at a professional level

Our government chooses teachers but once they have done that they assume that that is all. Even if it is a vehicle, when you buy a vehicle, even before you drive it you have to take it for service. They oil, tighten the bolts and then after some mileage, say every say 1000 kilometers, you bring it back for service, okay? The issue is that you have to reinvigorate the vehicle and fine-tune it. Even the teachers need to be fine-tuned. Even an instrument that is not fine-tuned well will not sound well. It will not produce the right sound (Peter).

In the last section, I explored the social injustices perceived and experienced by participants at the societal level, which spill over at the personal level. It was evident in teacher narratives that their role as teachers came with numerous experiences of powerlessness. Peter’s excerpt above encapsulates the need for government to continue to

\(^2\) These figures may have been larger had the report had the usual four regions (Western, Central, Northern, Eastern). This report breaks the country into six regions to include North Eastern and South Western regions)
“fine-tune” or, if you will, extend beyond hiring teachers to nurturing and provide opportunities for them to improve their craft. In this section, I focus on the injustices they face as professionals. I will examine four: low remuneration, underfunding, lack of preparation and imposition of policies from the ‘above.’ However, they also spoke about experiences of privilege accruing from their role as teachers, such as community respect and continued interaction with knowledge. Next, I expound on these issues while grounding them in teacher interviews, field notes and document analyses.

Experiences with privilege and powerlessness

There are privileges that come with being a teacher. For example, they are role-models and as the voices of reason. In my interviews with members of the community, teachers are revered for instilling values in the younger generation, but also despised due to the increasing reportage of cases where teachers have sexually abused children. And while there is public support for increasing teacher remuneration, there is also criticism for teacher absenteeism and unprofessional conduct. It was interesting to hear teachers speak about the positives they gain from teaching. A central theme in their narratives was the respect they still command in the community, their role in nation building by teaching the nation’s future generations, and the continuous engagement with knowledge.

... even in the village they respect us. We can counsel people. We like the life of teaching because with education you keep learning and you can even help others. We are now the light in the villages by showing good examples (David).

The best thing about being a teacher is that I keep building on my knowledge... With social studies you feel you are challenged, you feel you lack something, you feel you lack something really, new things are coming time and time again. For instance, when you talk of countries in Africa, Sudan is no longer Sudan: it is now northern and southern Sudan, you see? The East African community is no longer
as the one we had initially: it is now having 5 countries and yet those days it had only 3 countries. So social studies do not give you time to sleep. You keep on exploring and widening your knowledge (Andrew).

I just love music therefore teaching it is not difficult on my side though there are many challenges in handling but I love it. Due to my too much loud music I just find it simple and just like it like that (Amy).

The three narratives above are example of the ‘fuel’ that drives teachers at MGS despite the poor living and working conditions. Whether it is contributing to the community (David), building on one’s knowledge base (Andrew) or fulfilling a special interest in teaching (Amy), these intrinsic motivators are important considering the conditions and disrupt the privilege-marginalized dichotomy. In what follows, I explore educator narratives about experiences of powerlessness due to social injustices, beginning with poor remuneration.

Poor remuneration

Although teachers recognized the privileges they enjoyed as professionals, they also spoke about the sense of oppression and powerlessness that they encountered. Poor remuneration was a common theme. The first batch of teacher interviews was conducted in the summer of 2012, a time when teachers were in the midst of negotiations with government and industrial action over their salaries. It is clear that this had an influence in their narratives. A primary school teacher at Mission Girls School earns between 250,000 to 320,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately US$100-$130). In addition, the government provides top up allowances for teachers in hard to reach areas. However, Mission Girls’ teachers do not benefit from this hardship allowance due to the school’s proximity to the town. The first set of teacher interviews was conducted during the
summer of 2012 when teachers, supported by civil society organizations instituted
industrial action to pressure government to increase their remuneration. Their demands
included a 100% increment in their salaries and improvement of their non-salaried
benefits. While the government made some concessions, they are yet to fulfill most of the
promises made.3 Below are excerpts from the interviews that capture participants’
frustrations:

When I look at schools, especially UPE schools, I see that the teachers are facing a lot
of problems because of their low pay and salary. You know when you're here, you get
the message that private schools are doing much better than government schools. It is
just because of payment. You know the government schools are paying the teachers
very little money and private schools are paying their teachers a comparatively very
good sum of money, so this makes someone even want to double their effort to do
that work and at the end there will realize good results” (Charles).

“There lots of money issues in Uganda. Public officials are now swindling money and
leaving the rest. They are staying in the top class and not minding about the local
people here. For one person to earn 43 million shillings a month compared to a
primary school teacher getting 312,000 shillings. This one is a lot of injustice taking
place in our country here. This is very bad” (Fred).

Yes, teachers are supposed to perform all those professional roles–prepare a scheme,
make lesson plans, his truck students, supervise and so on. But when it comes to
external supervisors, first of all people who supposed to come and inspect must have
transport. The money is supposed to be sent by the government but it isn’t enough
therefore that load of work is left to the school administrator. Secondly it difficult to
carry out all their professional roles and yet teachers are getting very little money,
that is why the Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU) is saying that we have a
lot of work. The teacher is the same as the doctor out there. He's the same as any
other person in any profession who would be getting a whole load of money, the same
as the legislators, and yet we are the bottom [of the salary scale]. We are getting very
little. Sometimes that attitude comes in and teachers might say they don't care about
us. .... The teachers are always in the class because they have always wanted to be in
the class, but the question is can you have quality education? Can we be realistic?

3 The government promised to increase teacher salaries in installments. However,
these promises have not been adequately fulfilled.
Much as the government says there is UPE and enrollment is already very high and we are proud about that, are these children learning? Those are the kind of things that we're saying that's why of late, we're having citizens coming together—we call it citizens action—all the citizens are now concerned about this. Children are being sent to school, we have high enrollments, but teachers are not being supported because they also want to go home and make their families survive, therefore there is no learning in the class and there is low-quality education. In the long-run education is going to suffer (Ann).

Charles and Fred both situate low remuneration within the social injustices that they have to endure as a negative impact on their productivity. While Charles compares the package given to teachers in private schools to those in public schools like MGS, Fred compares primary school teachers’ package to that paid to higher-level civil servants. And while private primary schools sometimes pay better, the security of tenure is not guaranteed, as I will expound later. Ann talks about the need to improve teacher motivation in order to improve the quality of instruction. As a member of the national teachers’ union, she is at the forefront of agitating for better remuneration of teachers’ pay.

There is an achievement gap between private and government schools in the district. According to the test scores in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), students in private primary schools in the area have performed better than those in government schools like MGS. Of all the students who excelled in the Primary Leaving Examinations for 2011 with first grades, over 90% came from two private schools in the district. According to Peter, the teacher trainer, the answer is in better pay and supervision:

...the private schools administration is upright. For them, you have to do the Job and get paid for it. Here the public schools, whether you teach or you don't teach, go and
press the ATM [laughter] button and you get your salary. But for them there, no teaching no payment. And then in addition, private schools have another way of motivating their teachers like marking; they give them some little money for this. You know to produce teachers is one thing, maintaining teachers is another thing. ...That is where we have a challenge. The current salaries are not doing well. If we had a system like the one I am now seeing in the school--where we are having some kind of remedial lessons where they teach them before the actual lesson start and also at the end of the last lesson, and extend the teacher teaches they are given some little money which is just to maintain them so that they don't begin running up and down. I am sure that in private schools the salary is also small, but how they maintain their teachers, give them extra benefits to make them work—if you do this you get this in addition to their payment, so these teachers find themselves being maintained without lacking any food, any soap throughout the month. When their meager salaries come, they keep it like that, and they are satisfied” (Peter).

Like the United States of America where the achievement gap is evident based on race, socio-economic status and geography (Anyon, 1980; Dillard, 2000; hooks, 1994; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006) it appears based on perceptions of MGS educators that the gap between private and public schools is connected with socio-economic status, school inspection and better teaching approaches. Peter continues:

The biggest problem we are facing in this region is teacher commitment- a lot of absentees. There are some cases when the teacher is present at the school, signs the attendance register but is not working. S/he is just doing nothing. Structural problems like the lack of teachers’ houses, no or poor lunch at the school and poor remuneration of teachers- are demoralizing teachers, making it difficult affecting teacher efficacy (Peter).

My interview with Mr. John, the head teacher of one of the best performing schools in the district provided similar, but also contradicting insights on this debate. According to this head teacher, John, it was not about the money per se. Rather, it was better supervision of their teachers. In addition, they make teacher tenure dependent on academic results, pre-screen and select only the good cognitive levels and make placement decisions students
based on class appropriate age, cognitive level and history of early childhood education. Moreover, they also enforce retention for students they feel will not score highly in the PLE exams. While Mr. John’s perceptions on supervision are valid, fulfilling the conditions for admission into highly selective private schools like theirs is easier for students from affluent families. This is consistent with research by Lewin and Sabates (2012) that analyzed Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data sets from six countries - Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia - to trace the patterns of growth in participation and age enrollment. Table 1.1 shows the figures the findings of the study. Their research study found that in five Sub Saharan countries excluding Tanzania, an increase in enrollment as a result of free primary education resulted in a decrease in the proportion of children out of school between early 1990 and early 2000 were accompanied by an increase in the number of children overage in the same period. In Uganda for example, the number of overage children increased for males (45% to 54%) and females (36% to 51%). They also found that schools were holding back students in Primary 6 in order to maximize pass grades in Primary 7. The research concluded that children living in the poorest households continue to experience a greater likelihood of not being in school, being overage and dropping out of school in comparison to children from the richest households. This research study shows that while some public schools still retain students (MOES, 2011), at Mission Girls, this is only suggested, not enforced. However, privately owned primary schools that do not receive UPE Capitation Grants and School Facilitation Grants have more leverage and autonomy than public UPE schools such as MGS when it comes to negotiating government policies.
Teaching as survival

Low teacher remuneration makes it challenging for teachers to fulfill their primary functions as teachers. Participants spoke about their difficulties providing basic necessities of life, like putting food on the table, shelter, and educating their children. As a result, many have adopted creative means to survive. A common trend was that most teachers also operated what is referred to in local parlance as a ‘side business’—such as farming, petty business, or even hawking to survive.

...with my little salary I am struggling with it like that. I am also practicing some farming, but unfortunately we are renting [the land]. So ... we are now utilizing the food we cultivate from our garden, so at least by the end of the year, I have food in my house. The little money that we have remaining, we can use it for school fees, and what have you. We are paying the school fees in installments because we cannot raise it all at once. You know that even school fees at nursery level are so high these days, but we are pushing like that (Amy).

Me I am business-oriented. I grew up with my pap, and although my father was providing us with everything, I believe that even if you are a civil servant, you cannot keep your eggs in one basket land to do other things for your earnings so that even if your salary delays, you have something else to survive on....I am dealing in timber and clothing (Olive).

While teachers’ ingenuity should be applauded, low remuneration impacts their ability to concentrate on improving their craft, and their motivation to teach and learn. For Amy, practicing agriculture is essential to her and her family’s survival, while Olive has to juggle teaching, agriculture, and business. Low teacher remuneration also impacts the quality of teacher candidates recruited and retained, but more importantly, it results in teacher absenteeism, which continues to be a serious threat to the provision of quality primary education in Uganda (Kasirye, 2014; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011; Stewart, 2014). A 2006 World Bank study of Bangladesh, Ecuador, Peru, Indonesia and
Uganda (Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, Muralidharan, & Rogers, 2006) found that Uganda had the highest rates of absenteeism by primary school teachers in comparison to the other 4 countries. More specifically, the study found that absenteeism was caused by the problem of “ghost workers” who are essentially “in the books but never show up” (p.99). Lastly, they found that teacher absenteeism was more likely to occur where there were low salaries, and that an increase in monetary benefits lessened the rate of absence. It is plausible that the need by their teachers to engage in other income generating projects has increased cases of absenteeism at MGS, and as a consequence, students’ ability to enjoy good quality education is negated.

Teaching as a last resort

Due to remuneration and benefits, many of my participants became teachers by chance, not by choice. For many, teaching was framed as a stepping stone towards better career opportunities. When I asked participants how and why they decided to become primary teachers, majority became teachers as a fallback position, as shown below:

At times it is the conditions, which make us to be teachers because in the past, the money paid to medical personnel was little, so our parents would not afford to pay for us to study university on private sponsorship. So most of us were branching off in the education system- to TTC's because medical personnel could not afford to pay for their children tuition fees at government universities. That is why most of us joined the teaching profession (Fred).

At first I didn't really have an interest in becoming a teacher. My mission was to do something else however when I went to high school the financial situation became so difficult that I could not afford so I had to drop out. I had no other alternative so I went and joined the teaching course, which took 2 years, and I qualified. However during the course of the studies, I developed the love for the Job. And right now I'm comfortable in the field and I feel like I will continue until its time for me to leave and then I'll just leave (Andrew).
I am a diploma holder in education. I went for my further studies for a degree and of course I did not follow the line of my profession. I went for public administration (Charles).

That teaching is not the most lucrative of professions is common in most contexts. However, for teacher at MGS like Fred, Andrew and Charles who are struggling to survive, approaching the teaching profession as a stepping-stone has negative implications for teacher morale and attrition rates. Moreover, even though the government is not providing them with any incentives, many of the teachers at MGS are upgrading their qualifications so they can join other sectors, such as the NGO sector. Indeed, a circular signed by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Sports pinned at the District Education Office warns teachers to desist from undertaking long-term leave of absence for study without seeking prior consent. Further, the circular reminded teachers not to expect automatic promotion in lieu of upgrading “unless there exists a vacancy within the approved staff establishment ceiling of the relevant sector” (MOES Circular, 2012). Finally, the permanent secretary warns that teachers who undertake further study without getting study leave will be removed from the payroll. While the need to get prior permission for study leave is justified, the strong language used here suggests that such cases are pervasive and interfering with service delivery.

Based on the data and analysis of data (interviews, field observations and documents), I suggest that the job of the primary school teacher at Mission Girls is mediated upon by the struggle to survive and resist socially and economically and tempered by the increasing demands of high stakes testing (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Vizenor, 1994). While teachers are keen to contribute to national development by
way of educating Uganda’s future generation, and derive satisfaction from seeing the student succeed academically, their ability to integrate learner centered approaches that inform the social justice pedagogical approach is tempered by 1) a heavily centralized education system, 2) an undemocratic political system which polices the educational content, and 3) high stakes testing. Primary education is a means for the central government to succeed in the struggle for the mind and heart of the children of northern Uganda, an area where citizenship and nationalism have been historically contested. In addition, in an environment where there is a conflation of the state and government, as well as the erosion of political and civic institutions and the placing of power in the hands of the president (Mwenda, 2007; Oloka-Onyango, 2004] teachers have to survive and resist in ways that have the potential to make them targets for political persecution (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Vizenor, 1994).

**Underfunding to the education sector**

In chapter 2, the literature on government funding for primary education focused on two funding models for primary schools used by government to channel funds to schools: a) the UPE Capitation Grants, and b) the School Facilities Grants. Capitation Grants are intended to provide equitable access to basic by covering the cost of school fees and provide the necessary operational funds to run the school and access materials necessary to support teaching and learning. School Facilities Grants, on the other hand, are designed to provide schools with the financial assistance to complete unfinished classrooms or build new classrooms (MOES, 2011; Ward, Penny & Read, 2006). However, the funds disbursed by government to MGS as Capitation Grants are often
inadequate, disbursed late and continue to dwindle. According to the circular pinned at the District Education Office, Mission Girls’ received 784,000 Uganda Shillings (about US$ 313) for as UPE Grant money for the third quarter (April to June 2014). This means the government spent approximately US$3.6 per student for those three months. And yet, the government continues to tout the narrative of free primary education. Consequently, for the head teacher of MGS, it is a daily struggle for survival, but also of keeping the school open, as she explains:

First of all these days there is no free education as the government claims. As you can see from our accountability on the wall, last year we received about 1.3m shillings and this year we got 784,000 shillings for one quarter and that was last amount we received. That is supposed to cater for the 800 pupils for 3 months. To me I would say that parents should be given the freedom to pay for their children. They should be sensitized. The government shouldn’t say that it’s a free education. That is not there because it’s giving us a lot of problems down here. If the government was giving us adequate funds, that would be okay, but that’s not happening. Let he government declare to the parents to pay for food at school and other school requirements. If the government has the budget, send it to the parent’s but if they talk about free education, it is not in existence (Ann).

784,000 shillings for 800 students. That means for a term a child shall be paid for about 7000 but according to this current figure even that has reduced drastically. I cannot understand. It’s why many schools that are struggling to participate in MDD and many other extracurricular activities stopped because government is not finding anything and yet they want you to do these. It’s very costly all those activities that we’re doing out there. So we don’t understand this. It is not realistic. We are saying let them rub it off [stop saying it’s free education] and let the parents manage their schools as they used to do (Ann).

For me the good part is that it is something that is free of charge, but for me I am seeing that it’s more expensive than the parents used to pay. 1st of all, when you see the needs of the school and this UPE money which the government sends, they always tell the parents that they send enough money. At the beginning I saw that it was okay, but this time the monies are being reduced whereby what they send in a term is not enough to run the school. So the administrators have to ask parents to give something to top up whereby if you don't see critically, it is more
than what they used to pay. For example the school now needs teachers housing and this has to come from the parents. The latrine collapsed, the parents. Or the teachers are not enough, they charge the parent (Joy).

The MOES UPE guidelines also permit schools to charge parents a nominal amount to cover the cost of their children’s education. There is confusion as to whether UPE is really free education. Whereas the politicians tell the masses not to pay a dime, MGS cannot operate without parent financial support. To keep the school open, the head teacher organizes parent teacher meetings and engages parents into a dialogue about the needs, progress and plans for the school. She also requests parents to top up by paying 10,000 Uganda shillings per month (about US$4) to help offset the costs of teaching, paying Parent Teacher Association (PTA) teachers and marking examinations, among others. Some of it is used to maintain school facilities and keep the school van running. However, funds are still inadequate and the school is run on bare minimum. As a result, the school’s ability to provide quality education is compromised. Peter again:

The performance in our schools is getting much lower. Save for the municipality because here in the municipality we have an understanding among the parents as they can contribute some money to supplement government funding schools. UPE is becoming more and more limited and rare. As I talk now, it seems that for this quarter that is getting over the end of this month, schools have not received any funds. And they told them that they should not expect any funding. And another announcement from the radio--you know this month is for dance and drama, so schools are supposed to take their choirs for competition, schools don't seem to have the money to train their choirs. There is an announcement going on in the radios every morning that essays:" this is an announcement from the Ministry of education and sports. Teachers are reminded to take their students for competition [Laughing] even when funds are inadequate (Peter).

Underfunding has led to high teacher-student ratios due to shortage of learning spaces:
That UPE policy has impacted the performance so much because you know
individual differences are there and while we appreciate government’s financial
support to the school, there is a problem of the number of an enrollment and the
resultant high teacher to pupil ratio. You find that a class that is supposed to have
55 pupils per teacher sometimes a teacher might have 80 or even 150 students,
which as a teacher, class control alone will not be easy. And to reach all the
children will not be easy and you may assume that all of the children have
understood certain things that you are delivering to them but this might not be the
case because of the large number. You may ask questions but the shy ones will
not answer you (Peter).

Due to funding gaps, MGS is unable to adequately pay its teachers a good living wage, or
provide learning materials and fund the extra-curricular activities. As a result, the quality
of education that they are able to offer to their students is compromised.

Impositions from ‘above’

Teachers’ narratives focused on policies imposed at regional or governmental
level without proper consultation as challenges that make it difficult for them to function
as professionals. Teachers felt unprepared to meet the requirements demanded from
‘above.’ For instance, thematic curriculum requires that students be instructed in their
vernacular language up to Primary 4. Some teachers felt unprepared to teach in the local
language without adequate provision of textbooks in the local language. Olive laments
the inadequate provision of learning materials for the thematic curriculum while Andrew
suggests the need to take the teacher perspectives into consideration and wonders how
one can teach about the Internet without a computer, or even knowing how to use it.

Under this new thematic curriculum, we are required to teach students up to P4 in
the local language, but they have not provided us with enough textbooks to do so.
How are we supposed to teach? (Olive)
The ministry of education is always coming up with new things in the field of education, but also those things have their own challenges, like the P 5 curriculum is now talking about the Internet, yes. Now, much as they talk about the Internet, are they aware that the teacher doesn't know about the Internet or have knowledge about computers? ... If a new curriculum has been designed to let there also be that related textbooks immediately. And then also, if they're changing things from the status quo, let's also bear in mind that the teachers are also changing. Like I told you, I started teaching in 2007, and yet the curriculum is trying to tell the teacher who started teaching let’s say, a long time ago, you understand, it is like we are teaching a new citizen new things, not in a relationship to the old one, see? You understand? So, if possible let us also think about the personalities on the ground (Andrew).

...and also in our curriculum, I think there are other people who are carrying out research from outside and when they finish that, they impose it on us in education- “you do this.” And when that program is over, it dies its natural death, so the curriculum ends up being over congested. And the donors say that if you don't do this, we shall withdraw our donations. The government will come and tell us do this, we want this one to be done. The government is imposing all those problems into education. For me I know that education is the backbone of the country and it is through education that most of the government policies are implemented. But there are those policies that are imposed from outside (are not helping) (Peter).

Building on the top-down approach, Peter alludes to the lack of adequate consultation of teachers who are not often consulted at the planning level. And yet, they are at the frontline of education provision. This view is supported by research studies in international education development that have examined how globalization has impacted policy making in developing countries (De Renzio & Hanlon, 2007; Dryden-Peterson & Young-Suk, 2006; Samoff & UNICEF, 2004; Vavrus. 2009). Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) have altered the political economy of education in countries like Uganda facing austerity, with non-state actors taking an increasingly prominent role in policymaking (Samoff, ibid), with positive and negative results. Vavrus and Bartlett, for instance explore how the proliferation of ‘best practices’ on learner-centered approaches...
of teaching has become a key feature of “traveling policies” from the global north (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2004; cited in Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). However, quality has been reduced to the World Bank’s efficiency model with its input-output approach to learning, focus on large scale data sets and emphasis of reducing wastage and increasing efficiency in order to maximize the returns on investment. The challenge is that these policy prescriptions are assumed to be universal and are not always aligned to meet the unique conditions in different contexts (Tikly & Barrett, 2011) and as a result, policy formulation is reduced to short term conformity to donor demands in order to get funding, rather than the long term needs of the country (Samoff, ibid). Vavrus and Bartlett situate learner-centered approaches within the transferred policies. In Uganda, policies aligned to the human rights approach have been touted by international NGOs, and incorporated in the government policy manuals. For instance, policies for child-friendly schools including the banning of corporal punishment, the introduction of vernacular languages and emphasis of child centered teaching approaches. But while the policies may conform to those required by international actors, their implementation is always varied, complex and ubiquitous. It seems plausible that the impositions from government on the use of internet, vernacular languages and learner centered teaching approaches have been imposed from the government in order to conform to the tenets of Child Friendly Schools (CFS) approach, which is recently gaining traction in educational settings (Thapliyal, Vally, & Spreen, 2013; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012).

Social injustices at the classroom level

The teachers are always in the class because they have always wanted to be in the class, but the question is can you have quality education? Can we be realistic?
Much as the government says there is UPE and enrollment is already very high and we are proud about that, are these children learning? (Ann).

In the preceding sections, I have discussed the social injustices that educators face at the societal level and their impacts on them as members of the wider society. In the second section, I examined the social injustices that provided them opportunities of power and powerlessness as professionals. In this section, I discuss the social injustices that are manifested at the classroom level. And while the injustices were overlapping, the distinct categorization allows us to connect the injustices manifested at societal, the professional to the classroom. After all, the classroom as an extension of the wider society is not immune to the effects.

I relied on interviews with educators about the social injustices that are manifested in the classroom. Most of the narratives, like the two above centered on lack of quality education. The common themes included lack of learning materials, poor teaching methods, high teacher-student ratios, teaching to the test and over-teaching. In what follows, I discuss these themes in detail.

High teacher-student ratios

Adequate provision of teaching materials is crucial for quality education and is central to teaching and learning (MOES, 2011; Ward, Penny & Read, 2006). And although resources have been allocated to building infrastructure and reducing the student-teacher ratios, the high enrollments under the UPE have exceeded the supply of learning materials such as textbooks. MGS’ library was not functional with books in piles strewn in a dark room. In addition, there was no science room or laboratory from which to carry out any experiments. Teachers used manila boards to construct learning charts,
which were pinned in the classroom walls. The high teacher student ratio at MGS, coupled with the lack of adequate infrastructure has exacerbated the overcrowding of classrooms. Although the government had rightly made improvement in pedagogy and learning assessment a priority under education reform for quality education, with some success (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006) the inadequacy of learning materials as well as overcrowded classrooms and high teacher-student ratios hampered their ability to use learner-centered approaches and provide quality education. The excerpts below provide examples:

The P 5 curriculum is now talking about the Internet, yes. Now, much as they talk about the Internet, are they aware that the teacher doesn't know about the Internet or have knowledge about computers? If not then educate them so they can be effective. Therefore, if a new curriculum has been designed to let there also be that related textbooks immediately (Andrew).

You know there are some textbooks that are inadequate. The children are many but the number of textbooks is a few like this one here. For example, this P4 textbook I am holding. We have 200 P4 students but we have only 15. For me sometimes when I go to class and I want to give them to read, you cannot give one to each even though we have 80 students per stream. You cannot give one book per desk because of the numbers (Charles).

The teachers are trying. You want to be able to reach every child so that the child comes up to demonstrate and show that they are picking it...but because of the large teacher-student ratio, this is not possible. Initially it was one to 45 but you are now seeing 1 to 100. And maybe some teachers- a percentage of them- continue to follow the memorizing approach which gives nothing to the child, but this could also be because of the big student number, the lack of learning materials. You know in the times when I went to school, you would have your own book or at worst, you would be sharing it with your friend. But these days are not like the old days. The teacher has to use the board. So learning materials are very inadequate in the classes and that's why many teachers are continuing like they do. The end result is insufficient learning (Ann).
Teacher-centered teaching approaches
Teachers lamented the difficult material conditions that their students encountered due to funding gaps. A common injustice that I observed was the use of teacher centered teaching approaches dominated by lecture, cramming and regurgitation of knowledge clothed as ‘facts.’ Although teacher narratives alluded to learning as socially and culturally mediated (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978), students were provided with minimal opportunities to think independently or share their knowledge with other students. Rather, the teaching and learning moves were predicated in top-down communication and dominated by drilling and chorusing of answers, use of checklists that soliciting lower level knowledge and the emphasis of mostly procedural knowledge at the expense of conceptual understanding, or integration of both (Hiebert & Lefevre, 1986). In addition, although educators expressed the desire for an education that is problem-based and seeks to empower students for community change, there were minimal opportunities for problem posing (Freire, 1970), problem solving (Manouchehri & Zhang, 2013) or for students to bring their own funds of knowledge based on their experiential knowledge (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002), neither were there ample opportunities for students to connect their knowledge to make inter-textual connections and interrogate the social inequities in society (Tyson & Park, 2006).

You know when you invite somebody to participate, he will acquire what you deliver to him more, but when you talk on your own that is being passive talking alone where you come and narrate the story, they will listen but they will forget,
but when you involve them practically in the lesson- interact with them and ask them questions, they will learn and never forget. That is why the lesson must be child-centered. At the end of the lesson you ask them questions and let them now do an exercise for you to assess whether the content has been well taught (Geoffrey)

Classroom displays included learning charts (maps, parts of an insect, minerals produced in Uganda, decimals and fractions) prepared by the teacher, with only a small section labeled student interests (pictures of musicians local and international) in one corner. Often, the teacher or the textbook was the source of power, and students were, at best, passive recipients of knowledge. At worst, the students were empty receptacles of knowledge, a form of education that Paulo Friere (1973), the critical pedagogue calls “the banking education” approach. Below, I use my lesson observation field notes as samples.

Lesson Sample 1: P7 Science class:
About 60-65 students. The teacher is male. The topic is sexual organs and sex.
Teacher: “Sex is only during marriage, and only between mature adults. And between man and woman. If you have sex before marriage or outside the vagina then it is something else which is anti-social behavior. If you have it outside the vagina then it is sexual deviation. What is it?”
Students, in chorus: “Sexual deviation” [laughter].
Teacher: “When a man has sex with another man, it is called... [pointing at the word on the blackboard]”
Students: “Homosexuality.”
Teacher: When a woman wants to have sex with a fellow woman, it is called...” [pointing at the board]
Students: “Lesbianism.”
The teacher explains the process of heterosexual sex to students. Students laugh. Shyly.

Lesson Sample 2: P7 Social Studies Class:
The topic is minerals in Africa. About 60-65 students. Teacher, a male in his mid twenties, introduces the topic and asks the students to define minerals (“resources extracted under the ground or water,” one says). Teacher asks for examples.
When student who is chosen speaks softly, he says: “in social studies, we are training you to be the woman MP or president of Uganda” and “You have to speak loudly not like you are in a funeral.” When a student mentions copper as an example of minerals, others laugh. Teacher says: “Don’t laugh because even Moses was sent by God.” At another point in the lesson when students laugh at another peer, he says: “What did I tell you? When you laugh when someone is talking, then you are not ready to become the woman MP of this constituency.”

[question: is he preparing students for leadership? He tells me so. He is motivating them to aim for something bigger].

Teacher: “What is the heating of oil into useful products called?”

Students shoot their hands up. He chooses a girl at the front. Student: “Fractional distillation.”

Teacher: “Correct!” [I wonder whether the students can explain the process of transforming oil into products beyond the one-word answer!!]

Later, teacher asks a student who was absent from the previous lesson if she copied the notes from a friend. She replies in the negative.

Teacher: “We are now done with our previous lesson.” [I realize he was reviewing the previous lesson].

Teacher: “What are exports?” Teacher prods a student seating quietly in a corner. A friend murmurs something to her, supposedly the answer. The teacher is scribbling on the board. Student stands up. “It is goods bought from other countries.”

Teacher: “How many agree with her? Let's vote. There is democracy in Uganda. How many agree with her?” Students use their hands to vote for and against. Those for win.

After talking about the advantages of Libya’s oil (it is almost pure sweet crude and is geographically closer to Europe), teacher asks students to write (it is a continuation from yesterday’s notes, he reminds them). I notice that he is copying out of his scheme book.

Teacher writes notes on the board. Students are copying. Libya’s oil is highly demanded worldwide. This is because:

- it is almost pure
- it is cheap to transport Libya’s oil since Libya is geographically close to Europe.

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY OIL MINING [not yet discussed]

- price fluctuation
- pollution from oil industries
- it is expensive to extract

MAJOR COUNTRIES WHICH IMPORT OIL FROM AFRICA

1) Britain
2) France
3) Japan
4) Italy

Teacher: “Which countries buy Africa’s oil?”

120
Students: “Britain, France, Japan, Italy.” [Regurgitation- albeit with some student engagement]

Teacher: “I have given you only 25%. How many? 25%. Your job is to go and read until you cannot read any more about oil. We shall meet in a test or examination. [question: 1) where is the focus on Ugandan oil? Is it in the syllabus yet? Does the government want more awareness of the oil? 2) where is China? And the US?]”

Lesson Sample 3: P5 Class Social Studies (Religion)
Middle aged teacher. In her late 30’s or early 40s. About 70-80 students in a small cramped room, with desks close together. Enough to fit 25 students. Teacher starts with a lengthy recital of prayers- about 3 minutes. Teacher then writes the topic on the board. “Topic: We are the church. Subject: Describe the duties of a responsible member of the church. New words: duties, responsibilities.” The students read it all out aloud, in chorus. Teacher asks students, “What in your understanding is the meaning of duty?” Prods the kids to guess the meaning of responsibilities, and praises them for trying.

Responsibilities of the members of the church: 1) “To worship God. Through praying, singing, reading the bible, celebrating the holy communion, doing God’s work, acknowledging and glorifying God...”, 2) Living as Jesus requires us to by being honest, kind, don’t steal, love one another, be faithful, be generous, be respectful [values education?]

Teacher uses hands up, stand up activity to get students attentive. Teacher then writes on the board, copying from her book”

“Duties:
- To speak to God through prayer
- Donate money to others not able
- Spreading the word of God

Teacher asks: “Why do we go to church? To keep us from the devil’s way, for example, witchcraft. [no opportunities for the students to come up with answers]. So next time when anything happens, take your mothers to the hospitals, then pray to God. Don’t take them to the witchdoctors.”

Teacher asks the students to explain the meaning of the topic. The students regurgitate exactly what was taught. “Yes!” she exclaims. [I figure it is about getting the right answer, the answer in the exam – teaching to the exam].

Often students repeat what is written on the board. At the end, they are given an activity. Teacher writes the questions on one side of the board. The same questions that have just been discussed. The answers on the other side are rubbed off. [The teacher guides the students to answer the question in their exercise books. Questions are a priori. Not enough independent thinking or thinking outside the box by students; no group work.]

[The topic and checklist is derived from MK Standard Religion, PB5 Textbook: “List four reasons why a Christian should pray.” Some students cannot
answer the question even if the exact answer was written on the board, and rubbed off before the exercise was given.]

Although students were being prepared to pass the examinations through continuous drilling and test practice, student achievement scores in the district and national examinations were below the educators’ expectations. Certainly, members of the community that I interviewed lamented the failing standards in public schools, including MGS. The low academic achievement appears to be a result of teacher centered approaches that do not engage students to think critically. Bloome et al (1989), suggest that often, meaningful learning is missed when learning becomes a procedural display of the rituals of studenting and teaching. They suggest that there is need to pay attention to how students and teachers meaningfully engage with the content in classroom discourse. Below is a summary of ‘moves’ of teaching based on observations of 30 classes over a 3-month period between 2012 to 2013:

- Teacher introduces the topic- writing it on the board
- Teacher reviews the last lesson
- The teacher leads the discussion
- The teacher introduces the new knowledge without connections to daily lived experiences of students
- Students copy the answers
- The teacher then summarizes the lesson by asking questions based on what was taught, with students regurgitating the information [teacher-centered approach at best]
- The teacher writes a few questions on the board
- Teacher moves around the class with a red pen marking books, marking students work
- Students rush to fill in the answer without much independent thinking [It is always about the answer].

*Teaching to the test*

It is evident, based on their narratives that the major goal of the educators at MGS was teaching students to score well in the summative Primary Leaving Examination
(PLE). In their narratives, teachers mentioned that they derived their utmost satisfaction in seeing students pass the examinations and go on to higher education. While academic achievement should be a goal of education, it is often used insufficiently as the evaluation mechanism for learning. Some of the teachers at MGS critiqued the theoretical approach of education that focuses on academic knowledge, leaving out practical knowledge as a challenge. However, they did not critique the emphasis of summative evaluations and the weaknesses therein. It appears that the focus on examinations has placed teachers under pressure to teach to the test, and reduced learning to test preparation. Students at MGS are given 4 exams a month, as shown in the excerpts below:

Four exams a month, yes. We normally have what we call the textbook like this [opening textbook] you can do exercises this on the other end of the topic that you have taught. You can give tests on it. At the end of each unit also you can also make an end of unit exam out of it. And at the end of the month utilize some of the questions that you've done from the beginning of the term and do it. So those are the reasons why we know many exams like this one [shows me question papers]. The end of the unit test questions give you a summary of questions that help understand the topic (Charles).

We are trying to develop them academically by increasing tests. We are doing exams every end of the month. We are trying to train them academically on how to answer questions but our target is to prepare the child (Joy).

Our satisfaction comes at the end of the year when the child performs well. That is our achievement because we can see that we have imparted the knowledge and to the child and the child has been able to absorb it, perform and get good results (Andrew).

The learner-centered approaches of instruction are not taking the proper direction and one of the major reasons that teachers give is that the curriculum is examination oriented. Each time they want teach using the child centered method, they have to change the orientation to the teacher-centered method because of examinations. The community does not look at the other values of education, period! All that matters is getting a first grade. If you listen to the radios, if you
listen to the speeches, what they always talk about is "get a 1st grade." The performance of the head teacher is evaluated by the number of 1st grades they get (Peter).

“We need to liberate these schools from examinations and liberate people from thinking that it's examinations that matter. I don't really know how that can be done” (Peter).

In the first excerpt, Andrew talks about the number of examinations/tests that are given to students at MGS. It appears that there is an over-reliance on summative assessments to measure student content acquisition. In the second excerpt, Andrew speaks about his source of satisfaction as a professional, which is student performance at the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Implicit in the narrative is the assumed passivity of the student in the learning process as a vessel to be filled with knowledge, or rather, Paulo Freire’s (1973) banking concept of learning. Peter’s narrative explicitly focuses on this emphasis of examination as the only evidence of student learning, and situates it within the pressures that schools and teachers face from different stakeholders- including government, parents and even NGOs.

‘Over-teaching’

Due to the need to get students to pass the examinations, students are required to attend many additional classes. Even during the holidays, students are advised to purchase holiday worksheets and examinations. Covering the syllabus and revising examination questions has been prioritized over authentic learning and engaging with knowledge. Students are left with little time to revise their books on their own or enjoy co-curricular activities and enjoy a balanced lifestyle. Although teachers are trying their best to help the students pass examinations, surprisingly, the students mentioned in their
focused group interview that “too much teaching” was a challenge they face in succeeding academically. When results are announced, newspaper headlines and inner pages are filled with jubilating students, teachers and their parents celebrating their performance in the examinations. The infatuation with exams has led to a situation where students at MGS are over-taught, spending most of their days preparing for examinations, with little time to engage in independent reading or extracurricular activities. This can hamper their physical and mental health, and impact their ability to live a balanced lifestyle. Below is a sample daily schedule for students at MGS:

Monday-Friday
7:30-8am: Morning lessons- extra
8am-3pm: School day- end of the normal schedule
3:50pm- 4:30pm: Evening classes
4:30pm-5pm: General cleaning
6:30pm-10pm: Night classes (Field notes)

It appears that the predominance of the human capital approach to education has exacerbated this trend. Scholars within education have examined the proliferation of high stakes tests and their impact on teaching and learning (Alexander, 2006; Apple, 2004; Rizvi & Engles, 2009; Tikly & Barrett, 2012; Thapliyal, Vally, & Spreen, 2012; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). The human capital approach focuses on education for national development and fits within the World Bank cost efficiency objectives. And while it has been useful for evaluating whether students and teachers are physically present in the classroom, it has fundamental flaws (Tikly & Barrett, 2012). Most salient is its over-reliance on standardized testing and over-simplification of teaching and learning processes to rote memorization (Alexander, 2006). As a result, scholars have critiqued
the human capitalist approach for its capitalist labor approach -- a factory chain model-- that silences the voices of the students, stifles critical thinking and negates critical democratic citizenship (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2002). Eminent Ugandan scholar and legal activist Oloka-Onyango (2011) situates the human capital approach in the recent emphasis on examination scores. Making the case for critical thinking and lifelong learning for educating Ugandan children for the 21st century, he warns that the current over-emphasis of training students for the job market—which he likens to training robots— is a shortsighted move against innovation and critical citizenship, and sets a dangerous path for Uganda’s social and political development.

Conclusively, participant perspectives of social justice were grounded in the inductive approach with a focus on experiences of injustices as a lens with which to perceive social justice. In addition, they understood social justice to be pervasive and multifaceted, operating at societal, professional and classroom levels where they or their students experienced privilege and powerlessness. It is clear that their epistemological understanding of social justice was also grounded in the social and material conditions in which they lived and worked. In the next section, I examine how educators applied their social justice beliefs in their classroom pedagogical practices.

Q2: Application of social of justice

In the first section of this chapter, I examined educators’ perspectives of social justice. An important finding was that teachers’ perceptions of social justice was constructed dialectically and revolved around the social injustices existent in the social
and material conditions in which they lived and worked. In order to emphasize their interwoven and multifaceted nature, I categorized these injustices under the societal, professional and classroom levels. In this section, I examine how educators implemented their social justice beliefs into their pedagogical pedagogies in the quest for quality education. Data sources included participant narrative interviews, which were triangulated with classroom observations. In addition, interviews with teacher trainers were also analyzed for validity, while a content analysis of policy manuals such as syllabi, policy manuals and sectorial reports was conducted to understand the interaction between education policy and teacher practice.

Before I discuss the findings, a definition of social justice pedagogy suffices; after all, social justice has multiple interpretations and ideological camps (see, for example, Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Shakman & Terrell, 2009; North, 2006; Tyson & Park, 2009). I defined social justice as parity of opportunity regardless of group or individual differences or affiliations (Sen, 1999). I appropriated Tyson and Park’s (2006) definition of social justice pedagogy as a process, a style and a pedagogical stance that aims for using classroom practices and content to think critically about issues of injustice that students face in their everyday lived experiences and empowers students to use their agency to challenge and transform their lives and communities. Social justice pedagogy perceives teaching as a political act and emphasizes both content acquisition and critical consciousness. It is grounded in constructivism and is grounded in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 2002), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2005), democratic education (Dewey, 1966) and social activism. The teacher’s role is to
facilitate learning by helping students make inter-textual connections by locating themselves in the texts and ‘knowledge,’ as well as to recognize and critique the gaps between the knowledge and their lived experiences (Tyson & Park, 2006). As a catalyst for social change, social justice pedagogy is liberatory pedagogy because it empowers students to think critically (Freire, 1973), interrogate knowledge systems, appreciate multiple perspectives and differences and is premised on the philosophy that all humans should have equitable access to opportunities irrespective of difference or group membership.

In a nutshell, however, while the term social justice in education is used more broadly to cover issues of access and pertaining to educational opportunity (see for example Tikly & Dachi, 2009), social justice pedagogy emphasizes the use of social justice ethos in classroom pedagogical practices (Tyson & Park, ibid). The social justice framework is relevant to my research because it: 1) considers the historical and political contexts in which educational injustices occur, 2) recognizes the ability of education to empower some while disempowering others, and 3) it is more holistic than the human capacity and human rights approaches because it has democratic dimensions (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

The key questions in this section were: how is teaching a social justice project? How do you apply your social justice beliefs in your teaching? What does good quality education look like? The key themes were: integrating social justice in classroom teaching, through guidance and counseling, school community efforts for social justice, and collaboration with government and NGO bodies.
First, educators at MGS integrated social justice discourses into classroom discourses. The integration of social justice involved the emphasis of social norms and values that inculcated sharing and living peacefully in the community. Secondly, they used guidance and counseling as strategies for showing care and empathy towards students, as well as guide them to the right path to academic success and social transformation. Corporal punishment was used alongside guidance and counseling as strategies to instill discipline and as I surprisingly found, show care for the students. Lastly, educators at MGS implemented community-help activities which involved students carrying out community help projects to benefit the less disadvantaged in the community. These activities were implemented in collaboration with government and NGO support.

Based on these findings, I conclude that 1) although teachers spoke about learner-centered approaches of instruction as a key ingredient in their social justice perspectives, in practice, they often relied on teacher-centered approaches. Often, the human rights approach is desired (and is making inroads in policy manuals and teachers’ practices) but the human capital approach still dominates the pedagogical practices of teachers, 2) Any authentic connections between critical consciousness and pedagogy were more likely to be evident in theory/policy than in practice (consistent with Vavrus, 2009; Samoff & UNESCO, 1994). And while the education policies mirrored those transported from the global north, the pedagogical practices were more attuned more to epistemological orientations of the global south, and 3) Teachers’ ability to explicitly connect social justice and pedagogy was tempered by the social and economic conditions, such as the
need to survive, high stakes testing and the need to maintain the cultural norms and values which were not always aligned to the goal of girl-child empowerment. In turn, in negotiating social injustices and in their quest for what they infer to be quality education, teachers continuously resist and survive using subtle agential strategies.

![Figure 4.2. Teacher integration of social justice](image)

As part of the study, I solicited teachers’ perspectives of social justice pedagogy and if/how their social justice beliefs informed teaching practices. Their narratives revolved around teaching as a social justice endeavor; whether/how they integrated it; and how their experiences with (in)justices impacted what/how they taught. And while the interviews gave a good indication of their philosophical standpoint on teaching and social justice, triangulating the interviews with classroom observations were provided connections between narratives and classroom practices. A key finding was that educators were unclear about how they can explicitly integrate these issues into their daily classroom content and pedagogical strategies even though educators articulated the
injustices they or others they’ve known had faced at societal, professional and individual levels.

Further, participant narratives showed four major areas for the integration of social justice in classroom discourse, as illustrated on Figure 4.2: within content, pedagogical styles, values education and in community projects for social justice. Participants narrated how they could integrate social justice issues in their teaching by including social injustices that are connected to, and already included in the curriculum, especially social studies but also applicable to other content areas. The educators’ narratives showed a preference for a discussion of contemporary social issues, like corruption, lack of democratic freedoms and political intolerance, as imperative due to their connection to the lived experiences of the students and importance to national development. Secondly, participants situated social justice within their pedagogical approaches by emphasizing learner-centered approaches and child-friendly approaches. However, their ability to apply learner-centered pedagogical approaches was mediated by the cultural and material conditions in which they operated, such as over-crowded classrooms and corporal punishment. Lastly, participants demarcated values education as a well-aligned avenue to integrate social justice in the curriculum. The teaching of values education—such as care for self, for the community and environment—was tempered by the demand to prepare students to score highly in the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), which in turn, negatively impacted educator’s ability to teach for social justice. In what follows, I examine these issues in detail.
Integration into content

Speaking about where and how social justice could be integrated explicitly within the content, Educators’ narratives were centered on what can be done, while others gave examples of instances when integration was seamless. Below are examples:

Corruption and embezzlement is a topic in the social studies curriculum whereby you can talk about it seriously (Paul).

In mathematics there are also discounts. We can integrate it in discounts... You can talk about sharing ideas, for example when you're teaching ratio as a topic (Fred).

Social studies normally tell us: what brings about war? After studying and understanding and after finding out the causes of the war, we definitely try and avoid those negative issues... social studies also tells us about the effects of war like that the population, the destruction of property, retardation of economic activities, or even the separation of families, you see? So it keeps on reminding us of all those outcomes and also helps us find the way for those affected, to rehabilitate them so that they can return to normal as usual. … That is what I feel like is the positive contribution of social studies (Andrew).

From primary 4, they are restricted to only within the district. There, if I'm relate it to the war, that they will be called the stuff that took place within locality. Then when you come to P5, it's about the country, "This is Uganda." So the pupils are exposed, and that means social studies is developing them chronologically. Then when you come to P7 they're then learning things that take place in African continent. So, in relation to the curriculum, it is designed in a good way... One, it makes learning chronological. Two, it is from simple to complex. Three, the curriculum is emphasizing studying using concrete materials or the use of resources available or relevant examples which make very simple. That is what I can say about the curriculum (Andrew).

Paul and Fred provide examples of how social justice can be integrated into curriculum content, while Andrew explains how issues of violence and war are already integrated in the curriculum. However, there was no consensus on whether it was “safe” to critically talk about the war because “it is still fresh” in the minds of many students and teachers. There was a contradiction between educators’ narratives and field notes recorded over a three-month observation period. In addition, while there were instances when sensitive topics such as sex education in science were broached, in most instances it was a teacher-
led top-down instruction model that neither solicited nor encouraged student discussion. My field notes from the social studies and science lessons illustrate this point:

P7 Science Lesson
About 60-65 students. The teacher is male. The topic is sexual organs and sex.
Teacher: “Sex is only during marriage, and only between mature adults. And between man and woman. If you have sex before marriage or outside the vagina then it is something else which is anti-social behavior. If you have it outside the vagina then it is sexual deviation. What is it?”
Students, in chorus: “Sexual deviation” [laughter].
Teacher: “When a man has sex with another man, it is called... [pointing at the word on the blackboard]”
Students: “Homosexuality.”
Teacher: “When a woman wants to have sex with a fellow woman, it is called...” [pointing at the board]
Students: “Lesbianism.”
The teacher explains the process of heterosexual sex to students. Students laugh. Shyly.

P6 Social Studies Lesson
Teacher, a male, writes the date on the board.
Teacher: “Good morning students.”
Students: “Good morning master.” Teacher warms the students up. Teachers slaps (softly on the back) the students still not paying attention to him. Teacher asks who did last week’s homework of ways of catching food. Teacher then reviews last week’s knowledge - asks students for types of fish caught in Uganda, ways of catching fish.
Teacher: “This week, we are looking at the importance of the fishing industry in East Africa.” Teacher then solicits answers from the students. Asks other students to repeat an answer together, if it is a correct answer. Teacher prods the students with, “Give me more. There are many more answers.” Sometimes she says: “I like people who try.” Occasionally, “You can clap for her.” And when one gives a brilliant answer, she says, “Tell her that you are going to drive.” [a way to motivate the students- question: is this a way to integrate child-friendly approaches in classroom pedagogy?]. After students have exhausted all their answers, teacher writes on the board the benefits of the fishing industry from her textbook. Students then read aloud the answers as the teacher points with a stick. Teacher chides students who are looking distracted, looking under the desk: “How will you get the right spellings, where? From under your desks?”
Teacher then says you have to know 3 “importances” of the fishing industry, and if you can’t remember another one, you can then write “for study purposes.” [teaching to the test]. As teacher teaches, some students are doing the homework—“drawing the different tools used for catching fish”]

Teacher then talks briefly about the problems facing the fishing industry, and when it comes to political instability, asks the students if they know what this means. She reminds them about the war in northern Uganda and how it affected fishing on Lake Kyoga.

Then, teacher: “Any questions?” No one answers back. Very short waiting time. Teacher informs the class that the notes will be given to the class monitors as the science teacher is coming in.

In both lessons, student participation in the learning process was minimal. Students were, at best, empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. The teacher and the textbook were the source of knowledge and power, with the students acting as the proverbial empty shell waiting to be filled with knowledge, an approach that Paulo Freire (1973) conceived as the banking concept; and as a result, opportunities for a dialogical discussion of social justice issues were often muted (Tyson & Park, 2006; Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Shakman & Terrell, 2009). Although teachers spoke eloquently about the importance of student engagement at all levels of the learning process, students were not provided with opportunities to think critically or tap into their funds of knowledge. Rather, the mimicry and regurgitation of the right answer was solicited and rewarded as shown by the examples above.

Integration into pedagogy

While answering questions on whether teaching is/can be a social justice project and how they apply social justice in their classroom pedagogy, educators situated their narratives within the need to use teacher-centered teaching approaches that encourage
students to use their agency and participate actively in the learning process, as illustrated in the excerpts below:

..the kind of teaching which would be social justice project is the teaching where teachers are using learner-centered approaches (Geoffrey).

Social justice pedagogy is when teachers listen to the students and encourage them to participate in the learning process, not the teacher using chalk work all the time (Fred).

Yes, teaching would be social justice project depending on the way it is done. Because if teaching is done when there is a stick, if teaching is done when they are threats to the children, then I don't think it is a social justice project (Peter).

I was able to attend a dress rehearsal for the inter-school drama festival and interact extensively with the music teacher. MGS has a reputation for its strong MDD performances as a top performer in the district and national MDD competitions. Amy, the music teacher is very motivated about teaching and learning and speaks about teaching being her choice right from childhood. Although she is also qualified to teach science and agriculture, teaching music is her passion. When asked about how she integrates social justice issues into the music, dance and drama content, she says:

The key is that you have to develop a clear story line choosing from only one problem then you keep on developing...and that problem must be solved... You should be sensitizing the rest ...that if you have programs in your areas, then you should find solutions and solve them. So in music ... we are educating people. The moment there is a problem, there must be reconciliation so that peace can come up in that area (Amy).

Although Amy perceived her role as an MDD teacher as a social justice project, she also lamented her struggles for MDD to be taken seriously because it is not examinable. It
would seem that this is a result of the pervasive examination-centrism, the students do not take it seriously (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006).

Integration into values

Educators spoke about life skills/value education as avenues through which social justice values could be inculcated into classroom discourse. For instance, values listed in the Primary 6 social studies curriculum include appreciation, love, care, respect, sympathy, empathy, patience and persistence (Ministry of Education & Sports, 2010). Participants saw this as a window to introduce and discuss social injustice pervasive at all levels:

Social justice can be integrated in life skills in the class. We can teach the kids how to stay in the community, how to care about others, about what is happening in the community, how people are fighting over land... We can integrate this in our education system by teaching them about the negative effects of fighting for land (Fred).

For me before I begin my lessons, I must pray and then I try to at least say something to the children that brings up that love of God and togetherness and sharing and the importance of one another to the other one. And then the sharing... Let me summarize, to help them know the importance of human life and property so that at least one has that heart of respecting one's life and property (Sandra).

Teaching for social justice is teaching students the importance of religion. That is the source of social justice. Teach the child to know God and the 10 Commandments of God, which are summarized into 2: the love of God and the love of neighbor. So they have to share what they have. They have to love one another. Have to do community work. Love you teachers. Love one another. Share things. Forgive one another. If there is any quarrel all what, forgive one another. You also have to accept your mistakes, and this and that (Mary)

It is where teachers are emphasizing values in their teaching; where students are not administering corporal punishment to the students, where teachers are exemplary. But when teachers drink and then they come to their homes drunk--
because after you drink your students will look at you as you come home staggering, you come local uttering such nonsense even to your daughter and to your neighbors,... I don't see that as a social justice project. If it is done poorly, it is actually the cause of injustice, which is very dangerous [laughs out loud]. It is very dangerous (Peter).

The narratives above suggest that both educators believed that a focus on values has the potential of creating a socially just world. These narratives on values education conformed to the government’s policy objective of using basic education to “enhance spiritual and moral values and social justice” (Government of Uganda, 1993, p.38). For example, Andrew argues that teaching people the value of sharing the land as a resource will reduce the land conflicts in the region while Mary bases on the intimate historical relationship between Roman Christianity and social justice (Behr, 2003; Boyles, Carusi & Attick, 2009) in positing that religion is the foundation of social justice and religious studies content as a foundation for teaching the values of a socially just world. Although Peter agrees that teaching about values is good; however, it is not enough. He contends that teachers should model the values they teach, or put differently, walk the talk.

I suggest that although teachers articulate the injustices they face as individuals, educators and members of this community, they are unclear about how best to authentically integrate this in their pedagogical practices. This could be due to a myriad of reasons. They may not see the connections/need to integrate social justice into mathematics or, as Gutstein (2006) suggests, empower students to use mathematics to understand the world. Alternatively, it could be because of the human capital approach and the over-emphasis of high stakes testing as a result of its input-output approach to quality (Tikly & Barrett, 2012). How about applying a Cognitively Guided Instruction
(CGI) approach by (cite from MCP) by solving a problem with a real life context; for example: If the government of Uganda budgets 12 trillion dollars a year for education, but 40 percent of that is unaccounted for, how much is actually spent? Or, if 30% of donor aid to Uganda accumulates a 20% interest rate in 10 years, how much is paid if the amount received is 2million dollars? Such questions allow students to make intertextual connections through more engagement with the material, acquire the content, instill critically consciousness (Tyson & Park, 2006), and as the MCP program has shown (provide figures) achieve improved performance in mathematics.

Guidance and counseling

Guidance and counseling was another common strategy used by educators to integrate social justice in classroom practices. Participants used guidance and counseling as a way to instill values such as persistence and point the students towards personal and moral upbringing. Although the government policy emphasizes guidance and counseling as a key approach to instilling good behavior and enhance academic performance of students (Naker & Sekitoleko, 2009), how educators in this historically marginalized population framed and implemented it in their classrooms varied. For teachers at MGS’ with a vulnerable and marginalized group of female students many of whom are facing a myriad of social injustices (such as poverty, lack of learning resources, sex abuse), counselling and guidance was invaluable, although the approaches varied. Fred suggested that counseling and guidance afforded him the opportunity to engage with the child and get an understanding of the injustices that may be responsible for negative attitudes or behavior:
Those injustices do affect my teaching because if there are no basic needs the child will come to school in distress because at times when they are in their menstrual period they go can escape if the school does not have the sanitary materials. Sometimes students are sent home for school fees if there is no money. But what can the child do if there is no money? They stay at home. At times the child can stay alone at school here and have problems but you may not know if you don't ask properly and we are facing a lot of problems which often affect the their learning. When someone is sleeping or dozing in the class, sometimes there might be a problem and you may not know. That is something that we face a lot as teachers in this school and that is why guidance and counseling is important (Fred).

The severity and complexity of student experiences necessitate a contextualized and nuanced approach to counseling and guidance that is also mediated by the teacher’s personality and life experiences. I found that educators at MGS approached counseling and guidance differently. Amy, for instance, draws on her past experience as an abductee to engage with students who are negotiating and navigating physical and psychological trauma:

You know even for my children that I teach, you find that some of them also have trauma whereby you need to carefully handle them. If you begin handling them the way others are handled, they may even decide not to come back to the school. So in most cases where using a lot of guidance and counseling so that we are able to integrate all of them because many of these children of ours have been born in the bush [while under rebel captivity]. Many just came back as a result of rescue from the government side. So if you are handling those kinds of children, integrating them, you should use a lot of techniques, and one of the techniques is guidance and counseling. First of all, you must show them that you truly love them so that the trauma begins to disappear (Amy).

Amy uses counseling and guidance as a way to show students that she cares about them, but her quote also suggests that plays a therapeutic role in her own struggles to overcome
trauma. It also appears that the love and care she received from her community has given her the disposition to do the same for others.

Notice she uses “these children of ours.” This is intentional. She views her role as a mother to her students and considers it an obligation to care for them like she would to her own. The excellent performance of MGS at MDD is partly due to her charismatic disposition and positive relationship with the students. And the students do reciprocate, as I observed in their interest in the subject, their body language and in the interactions I had with them after the Music, Dance and Drama (MDD) competition rehearsals. In my interviews with the teachers and the students, participants also spoke about treating their students as their own. The students too related to the teachers as their parents and respected them as much. Unlike western contexts, parents in the school seem to trust the school and the educators to act in their children’s best interest. For instance, school research protocols do not include parental consent; rather, the assumption is that the school will always act in the child’s best interest (see Appendix for my consent forms). The perception is that the teachers are highly respected members of the community. And while they are poorly paid, they are also highly respected. The increased reportage of cases of teachers defiling students countrywide has dented but not diminished this trust.

Like Amy, Charles uses guidance and counseling, but with a different approach. He shares his own life experiences with injustice so that his students can learn from them.

Yes to me, the problems I went through I normally don't hide. I normally tell the pupils as I teach them so that if they could come out of such problems like the ones I faced and if they could also copy the good parts such as the determination I have had to achieve the level of study that I have, that would be good for them. I do not hide. I expose to them the history of how I went through my studies till now. Even though I had a father, I paid my own fees. I often advise them much as
you have your father, don't look at your parents’ property as your own personal thing. When your parent has taken you to school, you need to work harder so that you can gain a better life on your own, to read how the so that they can become self-reliant with time to come (Fred).

Andrew draws on his life story and encourages students to draw lessons from it. Like most primary schools, MGS has a majority population of female teachers. Charles is a father figure to the students. He is also a deputy head teacher, the head of the disciplinary committee and he teaches social studies. For others, counseling was grounded in religious doctrines and revolved around God’s plan for us all as his children. Talking about how they ‘deal’ with children who are struggling to abide by the code of conduct, Andrew makes a connection between counseling, religion and care.

We have various ways of handling ... pupils. One, you first of all get closer and closer to the child. By doing so you will understand what is making the child to behave like that. Then after getting the information, you now counsel or advice the child. After that you wait. There are some who will definitely change. They would just listen to you because you first of all let the child know that he or she's important. Thanks for our case, we just assured them that they are special and we look at this one as a Catholic oriented school and normally we put the name of God first. So we just keep on reminding them that you are special before God and to know that this is what we expect of you is this one this one and this one, we tell them they don't and the does, so there the majority [of students] normally understand (Andrew).

Andrew speaks about the connection between Guidance and counseling was also a way for teachers to show their students that they cared about them. Amy explains the need to make the students feel loved.

I treat all the children as a mother. That is what I tell the students. I tell them that all the female teachers here are your mothers. All the male teachers are your
fathers, and at a certain time if we are talking to them, we do not talk like a
teacher. We talk like a mother. Normally if we organize a girls’ meeting, we call
for the senior male teacher to also be there to represent male teachers, represent
their fathers. The language that we use in this meeting is different from the one
that we use in the class. We use our mother tongue and we draw them very close
to us. We tell them we really love you and you are our daughters. If you want to
counsel them, you must place yourself at the level of their mother, and then they
will see that they are really being loved. And the good ones, immediately they
will begin to follow (Amy).

In my field notes I cite an example:

It is a good day in July. We are seated at the teachers’ lounge, a dusty veranda
outside the head teacher’s office. The lounge is at a strategic position- it is adjacent
to the Primary 6, 7, and 5 classrooms. There are 4 wooden movable chairs and a
table. The cement floor has cracks. About 4 teachers sit here at a time. Teachers,
especially those on duty, often spend time preparing for lessons- marking,
scheming, planning and reflecting. Next to the chairs is a daily accountability log of
students present and absent for the day. It also has the prefects and teachers on
duty. I am shocked that on average, 150 out of 800 girls are absent on a daily basis.

Today, something interesting happened at the lounge. Teacher A, myself and
a few teachers were having a conversation when a pupil- a girl in what in my
guestimate is a P6 or P7 student came to register a case against another child. The
other child had accidentally broken her lamp and had promised to replace it. A few
months down the road, the girl reported, she still hadn't. He then tried to calm her
down, pleading with her to ‘forgive’ her friend since, although the lamp was
broken, it was still functional. The girl couldn’t stop crying. Her parents would be
mad at her, she said, sobbing. The other girl explained to the Teacher A that she
could not replace the lamp because her parents did not come for her visitation and
she did not have the money to buy it. Despite Teacher A’s pleas, the girl could not
budge. She continued crying. Exasperated, he asked her what she would want her
friend to do, and to put herself in her friend’s shoes. Still no change.

The story doesn’t end there. Two interesting things happened. Teacher A had
had enough. He offered to buy her a new lamp. The aggrieved student stopped
sobbing, smiled and nodded her head in affirmation. But before dismissing the
students, he compared this to an old fable: " let's not have this Gipir and Labongo
issues. Next time it may be you doing so [knocking another student's lamp] by
mistake." The fable of Gipir and Labongo is a fascinating legend about how differ
Luo tribes- Adholas and Langis became divided. It is a social studies topic, which
helps students learn the importance of values such as sharing, forgiveness and
empathy.

Teacher A told me later that the student who broke the lamp did so
accidentally, and her parents who lived in Southern Sudan, hundreds of miles away,
did not come for the visitation day, which prompted him to pay for the lamp. He
cared for these students as his own. I ‘see’ that.

The guidance and counseling approach conforms to government policy guidelines that emphasize the use of “alternative forms of punishment that are geared towards positive training and attitude formation and character building” (MOES Memo, 2007). The variability of approaches may augment student experiences and needs. I suggest that guidance and counseling needs to be increased to cater for both the academic and non-academic needs of students.

Corporal punishment

Although guidance and counseling were the preferred method of choice, corporal punishment was also used as a strategy for discipline. I found contradictions between educator interviews and observations. In their narratives, they spoke about guidance and counseling as preferred approaches for “talking to the children,” “getting to know the children” as approaches for instilling moral values among the children. However, I also observed instances of corporal punishments. Below, I present interview transcripts:

In the classroom, beating is one of the injustices (Olive).

I see is that instead of teaching values, the teachers and administering canes [administering corporal punishment], which is an injustice again. You find that teachers are using chaining all the time which was a method used long ago. It doesn't work now. These days I think children are aware of their rights. If you cane children, they even get lost from class (Peter).

Olive and Peter both situate corporal punishment within the social injustices that are prevalent at school spaces. However, there was a contradiction between these narratives and classroom practices because, although teachers spoke against caning students, the practice was still practiced, albeit in a moderate form.
Students face the front, with P1 at the very end. There are some teachers at the back, and the HT and teachers on duty at the front, leading the assembly. Teachers speak a mixture of English and the local Luo dialect. They switch languages seamlessly. Overall, the assembly takes about one and a half hours. Often, some students are called at the front of the assembly and their crimes read out to them. Corporal punishment is meted out. It is to act as a deterrent to other students. About 5 strokes of the cane each. They rub their backsides painfully. Brings back so many memories. It was more popular during my primary school days. If you didn’t touch your backside or flinch at all, you were a hero among your peers. The rest of the students laugh nervously. One or two sob loudly. That hurt. Seeing it now, it opens new eyes. I don’t like it (Field notes)

Student A: “Our teachers cane us because they care about us.”
Interviewer: How is that possible?
Student B: “If they do not discipline us, they will leave us to go astray, which can lead us into many problems” (Student Focused Group Interview)

The field notes above as well as my field observations provide evidence that corporal punishment is still being used in classroom spaces in the quest to provide quality education at MGS, even though there are suggestions by educators that it is a social justice issue. Interestingly, the students I interviewed did talk about- for complex reasons- did talk about corporal punishment as a sign of care. And yet, Article 44 under section (a) removes any justifications for contravening the provisions under Article 24. The Penal Code Act Cap 106, Section 221 explicitly states that any person who causes harm to another by an act of omission or commission is guilty of misdemeanor and liable to imprisonment for up to six months, while section 81 and 228 of the Act makes someone who threatens or assaults another person causing actual bodily harm guilty of misdemeanor and liable to imprisonment for up to five years imprisonment.

As educators often mentioned in their narratives, a good school is one that where the students have discipline, after all “discipline is the key to success” (Amy). Evidently,
the teachers do care about their students, for the most part. How they express and manifest this is contestable. Although the child-friendly school approach advocates for a positive discipline environment, this finding is further evidence that although the human rights approach is gaining traction within the education policies, it is still peripheral in practice. The research on educational policy in developing nations (see, for example, Samoff, 1994; Thapliyal, Vally & Sreen, 2013; Tikly & Barrett, 2011) show that in the last three decades of globalization and neoliberalism the transfer of policies or ‘best practices’ from the global north to the global south has increased. As a result, the dependence on western aid has altered the framing of policy initiatives in the developing countries, with more power increasingly vested in international actors and less power with government than before. However, these policy prescriptions do not often take the social and cultural context into consideration, and as a result, they are adapted to suit the prevailing conditions and practices (Vavrus, 2009). Based on that literature, I suggest that although the abolition of corporal punishment has become ‘policy-ized’ (see policy memo in Appendix D) under the western protestant and individualist philosophy of human rights (MOES, 2007; Moyn, 2010), it is still a common practice at the school, albeit used sparingly.

Corporal punishment has gone underground and continues in practice as a method of instilling discipline, albeit at a much smaller scale, due to its conflict with cultural norms and entrenchment within the cultural milieu.

Integration into school community projects
In their narratives MGS educators spoke positively of the projects the school has initiated and implemented in the community. MGS implemented community projects in conjunction with NGOs, the church, and the government. Their intended purpose was to inculcate a love for community members (Government of Uganda, 1992); and to expose students to social injustices and instill the values of empathy and agency for social action. Oftentimes, the teachers mentioned these projects as part of their wider pedagogical practices for social justice, as shown below:

In this school we have two major projects we run with the community. Replica was talking about peace and HIV-AIDS. The Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategies for Communication to Youth (PIASCY) was mostly about HIV-AIDS. PIASCY was about spreading the news about HIV-AIDS to the youth, the current young generation to protect themselves against HIV AIDS. It was also initiated to minimize stigmatization of people affected by HIV-AIDS. To help the young people know that any moment in time you can be affected or infected and if you are, what do you do? (Margaret).

PIASCY also came in 2007 and was initiated by the president of Uganda and this program came because the president thought it wise to guide the youth so that they are not infected with HIV-AIDS, to guide them. Some of the peoples we have here were born with HIV-AIDS but sometimes their community may not know how to stay with them and this includes the schools. The government made it a point to launch this policy in 2007 in all schools to protect the rights of people who already have HIV and to help people who are free of HIV-AIDS not to acquire it (Sandra).

In the preceding chapters, we expounded on poverty and HIV/AIDS as key social justice issues in northern Uganda, and specifically at MGS. I mentioned that HIV/AIDS continues to impact the region’s ability to navigate the post conflict phase. The Uganda Educational Statistical Abstract (MOES, 2011) states that 56,394 primary school students (0.7% of the total primary school enrollments) are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus, while the number for teaching and non-teaching staff is 3,285 and 1,337 respectively.
Alarmed by the epidemic and its impact on education in the country, the government – in conjunction with donor partners- launched PIASCY as a vehicle with which to prioritize and refocus the dissemination of HIV/AIDS-related information to pupils. Although PIASCY has been credited for its focused approach in integrating sexuality education to upper primary students, it has had weaknesses. For instance, the state of Uganda’s population report (Population Secretariat Uganda & United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA, 2013) states that the implementation of PIASCY “was not consistently delivered...[and] remains inadequate in content and failed in delivery” (p.128) and has not stemmed the tide of teenage sex, pregnancies and forced child marriage. Another weakness of HIV/AIDS-related initiatives like PIASCY is the low integration of content in classroom spaces (Population Secretariat Uganda & United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA, 2013). Research commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Sports (2011) shows that the most common method for disseminating HIV/AIDS-related information to students was assemblies (20%), guidance and counseling (19.7%), debate (16%), drama (15.4%) peer-to-peer (13.2%). Classroom/curriculum content is not included in the list. For an issue as pertinent as HIV/AIDS to be relegated to outside the main classroom and curriculum discourse is puzzling. This could be explained by a curriculum that is detached from the everyday lived experiences of students, a result of the preoccupation with test prep (Alexander, 2006) and high stakes testing that are foregrounded in the human capital approach (Tikly & Barrett, 2011; Thapliyal, Vally & Spreen, 2013).

Other MGS community projects focus on helping alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate in society, as shown in teacher narratives.
We are offering some services to the community to alleviate their suffering. Sometimes we contribute something together with the children and take to the hospital. We visit the patients there, pray with them and talk with them. And in the community, we sometimes choose the very poor. We go and visit them and talk to them and encourage them. We contribute the little we can, even 2 bars of soap and give them and they feel so happy. And in the church here, our contribution is normally obvious. We do a lot of charity work around here-like sweeping and washing the church and what have you. Our children are doing this work under the guidance of the teachers (Mary).

Yes in the school we have people come from Charities for Peace and they often speak to the girls on social injustices. The leader actually came here yesterday to teach pupils about how to stay safe, what problems they are facing, counseling. She comes and she shares ideas with the students (Fred).

Together with UNICEF, we are running a project whereby we teach students how to make soap, and they are using these skills to improve their hygiene here at school and in their homes and community, and transferring those skills to others while also improving on their overall health and sanitation (Ann).

While Charities of Peace inculcate the values of community service and hard work among the pupils, student visits to the hospitals to pray with the suffering provides students with opportunities to grow spiritually while contributing to community welfare by sharing the little they have with the less fortunate in society. Educators at MGS also spoke favorably of the sanitation project, implemented in conjunction with UNICEF Finland and Uganda. The sanitation project allowed students to learn soap making using local products, a vital skill, which they transferred to their homes, and communities, resulting in better sanitation and personal hygiene.

Of interest to the study was how these community projects for social justice have changed the students. According to the educators, students became more aware of the
social justice issues within their community and were given opportunities to use their agency to act for social change, as shown in the excerpts below:

By taking part in those projects, we are able to know the problems that people in the community are facing. We are able to identify and also to tell our children. That alone lets our children understand that there is need for hard work. If you don't work very hard, then your life will not be easy in the future. If you are somebody who has studied, you would not be facing those kinds of problems. Even if you have grown old, there is this kind of pension for which you would be entitled to help you. So days need for our children to work very hard in the classwork so that at least there will be somebody in the future. And that thing also has built the heart for doing such work in our students. That if someone is suffering, you should be able to help him or her (Ann).

There have been a lot of changes in these children, even outside. Whenever they go out there, people are happy, they bless them, they say continue with that spirit and you find that those who do not go, when the see these people, they say, Sister, I also want to go, and they go also. And then when they go to the village, they pray- and after praying, the villagers also talk to them and they are given certain things such as avocado and other things, and they come back very happy and they also encourage others to go (Mary).

Based on both narratives above, helping less advantaged people in the community benefitted the students as much as it did to the needy. Community projects also emphasized the values such as care for community, hard work and perseverance among the students. It is with this spirit that the national aims of education include the need “[t]o inculcate into Ugandans a sense of service, duty and leadership for participation in civic, social and national affairs through group activities in educational institutions and the community” (Government of Uganda, 1993, p.8). In an environment where classroom discourses are pre-occupied with test preparation, community projects for social justice
like those above are important avenues to enhance student awareness of social injustices in their communities and provide them with opportunities to use their agency to act for social change (see for example, Kinloch, 2009 for social justice work on gentrification by students in New York).

Conclusion

The results presented above clearly show that the teachers in the study understood social justice from the deductive realm and grounded it on social injustices that they or others had experienced at the societal, professional and classroom level. However, as discussed above, their application of these perspectives in classroom practices was more complex and nuanced. Further, it is evident that the unjust global system (including the donor provider-recipient dynamics) continues to impact teacher remuneration and educational funding while driving the agendas on quality education. Critical theorists such as Kincheloe and McLaren situate these subjugations within the neoliberalism paradigm that serves as a conduit for the proliferation of capitalist agendas such as privatization of social services, emphasis on cost-efficiency models and human capital approaches to education. While these policies have resulted in some improvements (such as increased access to education), they disenfranchise teachers and over-simplify the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, the over-determination of poverty in access to quality education has resulted in a continued subjugation of students from low social economic status, and for students at MGS, this is a daily reality that they have to grapple with.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The current education system prepares graduates to become job seekers rather than job creators.
MOFPED (2010/11-2014/15; p.206)

There is no innovation and creativity without failure. Period.
Brené Brown (Brown & Winfrey, 2013)

If you are not prepared to be wrong, you will never come up with anything original...We are educating people out of their creative capacities.
Ken Robinson (Films for Humanities & Sciences, TED Conferences, & Films Media Group, 2006)

Fueled by the public frustration with education for not delivering the promises of economic and social mobility for the majority poor and unemployed, public rhetoric in Uganda often focuses on the need for reforming education processes in Uganda to promote entrepreneurship and innovation. Grounded in human capital theory, the quote by the Government of Uganda captures this vision of education as a tool for social and economic emancipation and reflects the trickle-down assumptions also embedded in the Education for All (EFA) goals for equity. Renowned English author and educationist Ken Robinson supports these aims, but suggests that all children have the capacity for
innovation and creativity that is often “squandered ruthlessly” by schools in the quest for academic success.

This dissertation study is premised on the epistemological foundation that economic and social justice ideals are not mutually exclusive. Rather, as Amartya Sen highlights with his capability approach (1992,1999,2009), social justice enhances economic development by paying particular attention to processes that provide opportunities for all people, with particular emphasis on access to quality education and health.

This study therefore focuses on how social justice is perceived and applied by educators in the quest to provide quality education. This final chapter of the dissertation restates the research problem and reviews the major methods used in the study. The major sections of this study summarize the results and discuss their implications.

Statement of the Problem

As stated in Chapter 2, over a decade after the initiation of the Education for All (EFA) movement for education, access to quality education continues to be a challenge for many countries in Sub Saharan Africa, including Uganda (UNESCO, 2012). Free primary education has been widely embraced by many developing countries as a means to promote equity, enhance economic productivity and enhance human capacity for national development thereby benefitting the poor (Lewin, 2011; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007; UNESCO, 2012). Uganda’s Universal Primary Education (UPE) is a poignant example of the EFA policy for education expansion. And while there was a resultant rapid increase in education enrollment rates and Uganda became a success story, these
achievements have stagnated since 2009, with high attrition rates among students and teachers (Government of Uganda, 1993; UNESCO, 2010).

To this end, the Ugandan government lists social justice as a key objective of basic education (Government of Uganda, 1993), and so the declining quality of primary education necessitates an investigation of what this means in practice. Several studies have captured the statistical data on factors that impact access to quality education (Lewin, 2011; Majgaard & Mingat, 2012; Moyi, 2010; Ohba & Access, Equity and Transitions in Low Income Countries, 2011; UNICEF, 2010). However, few have employed a cultural-ethnographic perspective to examine teaching and learning from the teacher’s standpoint (Park, 2009; Vavrus, 2009), or explicitly made connections between the inequitable access to quality education and social injustice.

Review of the Methodology

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the study reported here was a critical ethnographic study of 12 educators at a school based in northern Uganda—a region of Uganda negotiating post conflict reconciliation and reconstruction after over two decades of civil war. This critical ethnographic study primarily used a qualitative perspective attempting to discern educators’ perspectives of social justice and how they applied it in their classroom teaching practices, which were triangulated with interviews from teacher educators, NGO staff involved in education, elders and students. The study was conducted over a two and a half year period.

The study was conducted at Mission Girls’ School, which was selected by community nomination and relied chiefly on narrative interviews, observations and
content analysis. I observed teachers for 3 months, spending 12 hours a week over the summer of 2012 and 2013. Observations were followed by an informal debriefing interview, as well as 2 principle interviews each, which lasted between half an hour to 45 minutes. Content analyses were conducted on educational policy manuals and curricula to understand the interaction between primary educational policies and practices.

Summary of the Results

First, teachers’ perceptions of social justice were based on the deductive approach and they understood social justice based on an oppositional lens of social injustices that they, or others experienced, or continue to experience at the societal, professional and classroom realm. However, teachers’ ability to explicitly apply their social justice beliefs in their classroom discourses in the quest for quality was less clear, more complex and nuanced.

Second, there was a contradiction between teacher perception of learner-centered teaching approaches, which they situated within the social justice pedagogical paradigm, and observations of teacher practices. Although educators’ narratives were in favor of child-centered learning, they often used teacher-centered approaches to teach.

Third, there was evidence of transplantation of educational ‘best practices’ from the global north to the south that focus on human rights and freedoms of learners. However, the policies from the donor nations were not implemented in generic form. Rather, they were adapted to fit the social and material conditions.

Fourth, throughout the study, educators spoke about student examinations scores as an indicator of quality education. But while some educators spoke about the need to
improve the declining test scores as the root of social injustice, others, like Peter, spoke about the reliance on examinations as a root cause of social injustice.

Fifth, educators situated poverty a major source of social injustices that impact them, their society, schools and students at a myriad of levels. A child from a low socio-economic background was unlikely to attend early childhood education that is privately funded, or access a private school or transition into secondary school. In addition, they were more vulnerable to child and sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence and the negative effects of war and dysfunctional families.

Lastly, teaching for most of the teachers was a form of survival both as professionals and as humans. This was exacerbated by the low teacher remuneration and was perceived by the educators to be an antithesis to quality education and an impediment to social justice. For most of the educators in the study, teaching was often either a last resort, or a transitional career towards other more lucrative sectors. These findings are discussed in more detail below.

Discussion of the Results

To understand social justice in the context of primary education at Mission Girls’ School, this ethnographic study sought to answer the following two research questions: 1) How do educators perceive social justice pedagogy? 2) How do the educators apply social justice in their classroom pedagogical practices in the quest to provide quality education? In what follows, I discuss the findings starting with a brief summary based on analysis of the interviews, classroom observations and content analysis.

Teachers’ perceptions of social justice

155
Educators understood social justice based on the deductive approach and based their perceptions on experiences with injustice. Their conceptions of social justice were dialectically constructed based social justice and injustices exacerbated by poverty and over two decades of civil conflict.

These findings, like Park’s (2008) negate Rawls’ principals of justice based on the original position “which begins with an ideal concept of social justice and then applies it in a procedural way” (p.3). This study suggests the need to desist from universalizing approaches that attempt to universalize perspectives of reality (Young, 1990).

My participants’ perspectives of social injustice were rooted in the social and economic conditions and are complex, multifaceted and interwoven. These perspectives were heavily steeped in the economic redistributive paradigm and their narratives emphasized need for economic incentives to ameliorate the prevailing conditions at societal, professional and classroom level. While this economic redistribution is imperative, this study suggests that initiatives for social justice, like Nancy Fraser (2006) suggests, need to draw on the multifaceted dimensions of redistribution, recognition and representation to mitigate the injustices that my participants face.

Further, teachers’ ability to explicitly apply their social justice beliefs in their classroom discourses in the quest for quality was less clear, more complex and nuanced. MGS teachers integrated social justice in the content, pedagogy and community projects. And while the educators situated caning students as a social injustice, they also used corporal punishment as a legitimate method of maintaining discipline, but also showing they cared for the students. These findings suggest the following:
Social justice was grounded in the collective realm with the individual important as part of the society. The interest of the individual was important in as far as they furthered the overall good of the community. This suggests that social justice needs to be embedded within the collective realm in order to align with non-western cultures that are epistemologically and ontologically collectivist.

Educators’ ability to explicitly apply their social justice beliefs in their classroom discourses was mediated by the prevailing conditions such as emphasis of high stakes testing and examination results, as well as epistemological orientations that clearly demarcate school as separate from political space. This suggests that the political nature of education needs to be emphasized if teachers are to act as advocates for social justice.

The perceptions about care and love for students were more complex and nuanced at MGS. Teachers at MGS care about their students, and treated them as their own children, and the students’ narratives expressed their perception of teachers as their “mothers and fathers. However, the perception and forms of expression of care were not always aligned to the hegemonic norms and values. In fact, the use of corporal punishment as care is more steeped in the cultural context and conflicts with the human rights approach that has become acceptable in official educational discourses globally. As such, there is need for more research that looks at care using frameworks that are grounded in the Acholi culture.

Uganda’s primary education, quality and social justice

The findings of this study were similar to prior research data on Uganda’s Universal Primary Education (UPE) consistently show that while access to educational
opportunities has been expanded, achieving quality education is still challenge, especially for marginalized groups and over-determined by poverty (Ekaju, 2011; Lewin & Sabates, 2012; MOES, 2011; UNESCO, 2012). The intersections of isms such as gender, socio-economic status, religion, residence and ableism intersected in dynamic ways that doled out some privileges, but mostly disempowered the teachers and students at MGS by impacting their access to quality education. And yet, aligned with the human capital approach to quality education, educators at MGS defined quality education within the context of student performance in the summative Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) and access to adequate learning resources, or lack thereof. Rather than reform the assessment methods, majority of the educators in this study spoke about the need to improve the declining test scores as the root of social injustice. The only contradictory narrative in this regard was Peter’s who spoke about the reliance on examinations as a root cause of social injustice.

This finding has two implications: First, educational policies for equity and social justice need to holistically address poverty and its intersection with other isms such as gender, rurality, level of conflict and religion. Second, there is a need to re-conceptualize new approaches for evaluating quality education that goes beyond the current infatuation with statistical data based on indicators. Although the human rights approach is becoming more present in educational discourses, the human capital approach is still the dominant approach for evaluating educational quality (Thapliyal, Vally, & Spreen, 2013; Tikly & Barrett, 2012) with focus on statistical data and test scores as the only benchmarks of quality education (Ward, Penny & Read, 2006) do not account for the everyday lived
experiences and ignore the interplay and manifestation of injustices faced at the societal and individual level.

Furthermore, a re-examination of the role of examinations in educational quality evaluations is necessary. And while examinations are a useful tool in selecting, certifying and accounting, an over-emphasis of examinations can be a hindrance, resulting in preoccupation with teaching students to pass the test and a proliferation of lower level cognitive skills that encourage regurgitation and cram work (Alexander, 2006; Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992). Peter expresses this concern when he says, “we need to liberate these schools from examinations and liberate people from thinking that it's examinations that matter.” Finally, evaluation of quality needs to go beyond the current emphasis of effectiveness, cost and statistical data (Lewin & Sabates, 2012). Tikly and Barrett (2011), for instance, have suggested a social justice and capability approach to quality education that combines the social justice elements and the capability approach whilst drawing on the strengths of the human capital and human rights approaches as a framework for evaluating educational quality.

Application of social justice in classroom pedagogical discourses

There was a contradiction between teacher narratives that emphasized learner-centered teaching approaches, which they situated within the social justice pedagogical paradigm, and observations of teacher practices. Although educators’ narratives were in favor of child-centered learning, they often used teacher-centered approaches to teach.

Following Vavrus and Bartlett, teachers' ability to employ learner-centered approaches were tempered by the social and material conditions in which they lived and
worked. These included the absence of technology and learning materials, over-crowded classrooms and reliance on examinations. Teachers’ ability to apply social justice in their teaching practices was hampered by the pressure to prepare students to pass the summative tests. This re-emphasizes the need to re-examine the role of examinations, as discussed in preceding section. In addition, there is need to include more community projects for social justice to provide more opportunities for students to participate as agents for social change in their communities while providing them with skills and knowledge. Further, there is need for more opportunities to train and re-orient teachers on how to employ learner centered approaches by modeling what it means to democratize classroom spaces and disrupt power hierarchies within classroom pedagogical practices and enable students to become problem solvers and innovators in the classroom, rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Ultimately, in order to achieve the often spoken about aim of job-creators and not job seekers, then there is need to shift from the teacher-led, examination centered approach to an inquiry-based, problem based learning approach that encourages students to use their funds of knowledge (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002), take risks, be accountable for their own learning and become producers of knowledge.

The implication of this finding is that we need to consider the context in which teaching and learning takes place and how teachers’ epistemological understanding of teaching and learning. After all, teachers do matter due to their frontline position in the teaching and learning process, (Joseph, 2013). Rather than use top-down policy-making and implementation that often ignore their input, there is need to involve them at all levels of education policy formulation and implementation (Park, 2008; Vavrus, 2006).
The local-global dynamics and social justice

There is increasing research on the connection between global justice and social justice in developing countries, such as Uganda (Ballchus, 1999; Scrase, 1999; Tikly & Dachi, 2009). The last three decades of neoliberal policies has altered the educational policy-making dynamics in Sub Saharan Africa. For instance, Samoff’s study of 5 countries experiencing austerity measures found that the policy-making power in Tanzania was increasingly shifting from government officials to international donors. Vavrus and Bartlett found that policies emphasizing learner-centered pedagogy was one of the policies from the global north were being transported to the global south in the name of “best practices.” Consistent with those studies, I found that Uganda’s Universal Primary Education (UPE), the emphasis of human capital indices and the increasing prominence of child-friendly policies such as the ban on corporal punishment and emphasis of learner centered approaches are grounded in western agendas and policies. But while the policies were identical, the practices were more complex and nuanced. Educators at MGS adapted the policies to suit the social and material conditions in which they lived and worked, and to suit their epistemological and ontological orientations of what it meant to teach and learn.

This suggests that educators matter in the implementation of educational policy, and need to be involved at all levels of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

This study, like Vavrus and Bartlett’s (ibid) suggests that contexts matter. Policy implementation in third world contexts is often adapted to suit the social and material
conditions in which teaching and learning takes place. At MGS, these conditions included over-crowded classrooms, unmotivated and poorly remunerated teachers, inadequate supplies of learning materials and lack of technology needed to efficiently implement policy.

In addition, more research needs to focus on how teachers negotiate and navigate the social injustices they face in the quest to provide quality education. Although there is research that focus on how policies on education are implemented, few studies focus on how teachers- who are at the frontline of implementation- negotiate the processes involved.

Teaching as survival and resistance

For most of the educators at MGS, teaching was a daily struggle for survival both as professionals and as humans. They functioned under challenging circumstances and their ability to keep their dignity in the face of unjust pay was a constant challenge. This was exacerbated by the low teacher remuneration and inadequate training that was perceived by the educators to be an antithesis to quality education and an impediment to social justice. As a result, for most of the educators in the study, teaching was often either a last resort, or a transitional career towards other more lucrative sectors. Teachers were either upgrading their qualification through further study or waiting for the next opportunity to join more financially rewarding careers. Teachers relied on teaching extra classes, running petty businesses or farming to subsidize family income. While their ingenuity is to be admired, it distracts them from teaching and improving their craft, and does not augur well for the overall quality of education.
This suggests that educational initiatives on improving primary education need to address teacher remuneration, as this will have a positive impact on retention of experienced teachers whilst allowing them to focus on improving their craft.

There is need for adequate planning and training of teachers before initiatives for primary schools are rolled out. Teachers felt unprepared to adequately implement the thematic curriculum as required by policy.

Educational funding for inspection need to be adequate to ensure school inspection is carried out in a timely and expected manner. The lack of fuel, for instance has made it challenging for inspectors to visit hard to reach areas, living the responsibility of inspection to head teachers.

Future Research

Over a decade since the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the initiation of Education for All (EFA), access to quality education continues to be a social justice concern for educationists and other stakeholders in Uganda. And while the Uganda government considers social justice a key objective of basic education, there is little research that examines what this means in classroom practices. Further, research on educational development in Uganda is often presented using large-scale quantitative comparative data, leaving a void of in-depth qualitative research about how teachers perceive and negotiate social justice in their classrooms. This two year critical ethnographic study fills that void by focusing on the perceptions and practices of twelve primary school educators at a girls’ school in northern Uganda, with education stakeholders in the community as a secondary source. The study employed a critical
theoretical framework and relied on narrative interviews, classroom observations and
documents to highlight the voices of the teachers and examine how they apply social
justice. The findings indicate that rather than approach social justice through an inductive
idealistic lens, participants’ perceptions of social justice were grounded in the deductive
realm and they understood social justice through a realist lens using concrete experiences
of social injustices at the societal, professional and classroom level.
Further, their application of social justice in pedagogical practices was more subtle and
complex, and mediated by the social and economic conditions in which they lived and
worked.

The findings of this research study are the beginning step of my research on social
justice in non-western contexts. The study provides the following insights for future
research: First, future research will examine how the interplay between the collective and
individualist orientations impact how educators at MGS perceive citizenship and social
justice. Second, future research will focus on how educators negotiate educational
policies such as class retention, citizenship education and the thematic curriculum as well
as the language policy in the quest for quality education. Lastly, I found that corporal
punishment continues to exist as a manifestation of care and as a discipline tool despite
its criminalization in policy. My future research will attempt to understand this gap by
focusing on how the human rights and human capital approach continue to impact how
teachers relate with students, specifically critically examine the place of corporal
punishment within educational spaces.
Conclusion

It is clear, based on the narratives of educators at MGS as well as policy reports and public debate on Uganda’s education that quality continues to elude most children at MGS who are from low socio-economic backgrounds. The lack of access to quality education negates the EFA mission of using education as a key component for national development, equity and social justice. Further, the data represents a general disillusionment with UPE due to perceived low returns on investment and a concern for lack of skills and opportunities. Grounded in the human capital approach, the common rhetoric expressed in the government policy manuals such as the Plan 2040 is that education should ‘produce’ graduates who are job creators, not job seekers who will create jobs and transform Uganda into a middle-income economy by 2040. But as Brené Brown eloquently suggests in the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter, innovation and creativity is fostered in an environment where failure is a step in the long road towards success, not an inhibition to progress. Students need to be empowered to be lifelong learners through the use of learner-centered and inquiry-based approaches that emphasize and integrate critical thinking in the pedagogical policies and practices right from early childhood education. This necessitates a rethink of the role of examinations as a quality evaluation tool as well as the improvement of the social and material conditions in which teachers and students operate to ensure retention of motivated and effective teachers who are grounded in a constructive epistemological philosophy and continuously reflective on how to improve their craft. For this to happen, classrooms spaces need to democratized and power-hierarchies between teachers and students dismantled to ensure that students

165
are active, creative, co-producers of knowledge and agents of social change who are confident in their ability, but freed from the fear of failure. That, I reckon, is the pedagogical environment that fosters creativity and innovation.

The findings of this research study therefore show that initiatives on quality education and social justice need to address the complex nature of policy implementation, include teachers’ voices and consider the social and material conditions that are contextually grounded in ways that intentionally and unintentionally perpetuate the very injustices they are meant to eliminate.
Appendix A: Research Authorization
June 6, 2013

Protocol Number: 2012B0225
Protocol Title: "WE, THE CHILDREN:" TEACHING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN NORTHERN UGANDA, Cynthia Tyson, Gilbert Kaburu, Math Science & Technology
Type of Review: Continuing Review—Expedited
IRB Staff Contact: Kellie Hall Phone: 614-292-0569 Email: hall.1451@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Tyson,

The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW the above referenced research. The Board was able to provide expedited approval under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for expedited review, as indicated below.

Date of IRB Approval: June 2, 2013
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: June 2, 2014
Expedited Review Category: 7

In addition; the research was reapproved for the inclusion of children (permission of one parent sufficient) and non-English speaking participants, for a waiver of documentation of the consent process and for a waiver of documentation of the parental permission process.

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

This approval is valid for one year from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00006378. All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

[Signature]
Steve Beck, PhD, Co-Chair
Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board
24th April, 2012

The District Education Officer
Gulu District.

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Gilbert Kaburu. I am a Ugandan PhD in Education student at The Ohio State University. I am also taking classes in African Studies. I consider it my life’s mission as well as the essence of my identity to use the skills acquired here to help build our country. As such, I intend to conduct my PhD dissertation research in Uganda. To be able to do this, from June to August this year, I will carry out a pilot study on how education is framed by different stakeholders, and observe primary six social studies classroom interactions on how content, pedagogy and practice of education are framed and implemented. I will interview teachers, administrators, and policy makers. These interviews and classroom observations will take place in Gulu and Kampala. I am therefore requesting for permission to carry out this work in your area of jurisdiction.

Currently, I am working as a Graduate Research Associate with The Ohio State University Mathematics Coaching Program, a federally funded project for training mathematics coaches who work with teachers to improve academic performance in low achieving schools. My area of expertise is on issues of diversity, equity and social justice. I have also conducted research on the impact of physical education and sports participation on the academic performance of elementary school students.

I am pledging to use this experience, plus my experience as a student as well as teacher in both local and international schools in Uganda to work with the community by conducting professional development workshops as well as sharing my findings with the community members.

Your response will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Gilbert Kaburu

cc. The District Education Officer, Gulu
cc. Headteachers, Gulu District
cc. Ministry of Education and Sports
Appendix B: Research Grant
Friday, April 20, 2012

Dear Gilbert Kaburu,

Thank you for your application to the 2012 Mershon Center student grants competition. I am glad to inform you that your project, “We, the Children,” has been approved by the Provost’s Oversight Committee as part of Mershon’s FY 2013 budget. The funding for your research included in the Mershon budget will be available to you as of July 1, 2012. Please sign and return the student award terms and conditions agreement form, and contact the Mershon fiscal officer, Kyle McCray, at 614-292-3810 or mccray.44@osu.edu to discuss the disbursement of your funds.

The Selection Committee was comprised of five distinguished professors from different departments in the Humanities and the Social and Behavioral Sciences. They evaluated proposals according to a number of criteria: 1) scholarly merit, 2) the likelihood of a high quality written product, 3) the student’s academic track-record, and 4) the relevance of the proposed activity to the Mershon Center’s core substantive foci.

As a condition of receiving this funding, you should expect to participate in a reception held to recognize all grant winners. You should also be prepared to turn in a short research report and present the findings of your research as part of a seminar, panel, or conference held at the Mershon Center.

I look forward to hearing more about your research and wish you the best of luck with your project.

Sincerely,

J. Craig Jenkins
Director, Mershon Center for International Security Studies
Appendix C: Consent Forms
The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

“We, The Children”: Teaching for Social Justice in Northern Uganda

You are being asked to be in a research study.

Before you agree, the researcher must tell you about:

- Why the study is being done
- What will happen in the study and how long you will be asked to take part in the study
- Any procedures that will only be done because you are in the study
- What risks or discomforts you can expect from being in the study
- Possible benefits to you or others
- Other choices you have besides being in the study, and
- How information obtained about you in the study will be kept private.

Depending on the study, the researcher must also tell you about:

- The possibility that there may be unexpected risks
- When the researcher may stop you from taking part in the study
- What happens if you decide to stop being in the study
- When you will be told about any new findings that may affect your decision to continue to take part in the study
- Any added costs to you
- How many people will be in the study.

You may choose if you want to take part in this study. You may choose not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in the study, you may leave the study at any time. No matter what decision you make, there will be no penalty to you. You will not lose any of your usual benefits.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Professor Cynthia A. Tyson at The Ohio State University School of Teaching and Learning on at +1 (614) 292 1257.
For questions about your rights as someone taking part in this study, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251. You may call this number to discuss concerns or complaints about the study with someone who is not part of the research team.

Signing this form means that the study has been described to you. You will be given a chance to ask questions. Before choosing to take part in the study, you should have all of your questions answered.
You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this form. You will also be given a written summary of the study, if you ask for it.

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“We, the Children”: Teaching for Social Justice in Northern Uganda
Verbal Script for Obtaining Informed Consent
(Graduate Student Co-Investigator – Consent Documentation Waived)

“Hello, my name is Gilbert Kaburu. I am a graduate student at The Ohio State University in the School of Education and Human Ecology, and I am in Uganda undertaking research that will inform my thesis.

I am studying how different stakeholders frame social justice and education in post-conflict contexts. I would like to ask you a series of questions about your experiences as a student and important member of the community. I am very interested in your opinions on the why education is important and what role, if any, it can play in a region like this one going through post conflict reconciliation.

The information you share with me will be beneficial in helping the different stakeholders understand how best to make required interventions as well as ensure participatory participation by presenting the voices of the students, teachers, and community elders that is often absent in educational discourses.

This discussion will take about an hour of your time. I will schedule and conduct follow up interviews with you if it is necessary. I will ensure that you have ample notification beforehand.

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality. I will not link your name to anything you say, either in the transcript of this interview or in the text of my thesis or any other publications.

There are no other expected risks of participation.

Participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can, of course, decline to answer any question as well as to stop participating at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me, my academic supervisor or our university research office at any time.”

(The respondent will be given an information card, when applicable, containing name, institutional affiliation, and contact information).

“I would like to make a tape recording of our discussion, so that I can have an accurate record of the information that you provide to me. I will transcribe that recording by hand or using a software tool, and will keep the transcripts confidential and securely in my possession. I will erase the tape after I transcribe it.”

“Do you have any questions about this research? Do you agree to participate and may I record our discussion?

If so, let’s begin….”
Appendix D: Government Memos
A TEMORARY BAN ON THE USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENTS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

1. The use of the cane and, in many cases, rampant beating of school children and students under the guise of disciplining them by applying corporal punishments has been discharged without generally agreed guidelines or regulation to restrain it’s excessive usage. Whereas Corporal punishment is prescribed in the penal code of Uganda Laws, usually accompanied with hard labor, the use of the cane in schools is not equally governed by clearly defined procedures, rules or guidelines to give it a positive and professional value as a deterrent measure in promoting discipline.

2. Over a period of time, professional values traditionally derived from the use of corporal punishments as a deterrent and disciplining measure to be applied on growing children have been eroded through indiscriminate use of the cane.

In practice, the use of the cane in schools has deteriorated into random and irresponsible beating of school children by teachers or fellow pupils. This has resulted in untold
injuries, physical impairments and, in some cases, actual death. In some cases even the bare hand or use of the nearest hard object has inflicted a disability of one form or another on the victims.

In the absence of clear procedures, rules and guidelines on the application of corporal punishments in schools in general and in view of the seriousness of the uncontrolled use of the cane in particular, it has been found necessary to put a complete stop to the use of the cane in schools and random beating of children by teachers before a policy on this is finally put in place.

3. The following measures therefore take immediate effect:

i) Random beating of school children and students in schools and colleges by teachers must stop forthwith. This equally applies to meting out any form of punishment or act that may induce or cause injury, damage, defilement or disfigurement to the human body.

ii) The use of the cane as a disciplining measure shall not be permitted in nursery schools and infant classes at this tender age that ought to be brought up in love and fellowship rather than brutality, violence and sadism.

iii) Every school should immediately review it’s school rules and code of punishments with a view to introducing more professional and acceptable sanctions to replace the stereotypes of manual labor and caning. These should be subject to approval by the school management committees or Boards of Governors to ensure that the measures taken do not in any way disguise other forms of brutality.

iv) In all circumstances, the entire system of punishments in schools and colleges must be approved by the School Management Committees or Boards of Governors as the case may be.
v) Any punishment incident in future must be recorded in a punishment book, clearly indicating the type of offence, type of punishment, authorization and the particulars of the offence.

vi) Those who deem it professionally defendable, justifiable and necessary to introduce use of corporal punishment in schools and colleges must come up with a clearly conceived definition, procedure and prescription of how best to administer the punishment. This then will be a useful basis for generating national debate which may in turn enhance the enactment of an appropriate law.

vii) Where these guidelines are ignored or abused, the culprits will be criminally held responsible for their actions and will have to face the law including the Professional Code of Conduct.

With these restraints, it is expected that most schools will opt for developing more professional and refined methods of guiding and counseling pupils, students, teachers and parents in the use of alternative and more positive training in attitude formation and character building among the youth. Our ultimate goal ought to be minimal administration of punishments in the schools system in preference to a system of getting to know and understand the needs of the youth more intimately.

Stephen B Maloba
COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION

c.c. The Permanent Secretary
   Ministry of Education.
c.c. The Permanent Secretary
   Ministry of Local Government
c.c. The Commissioner for Education (Inspectorate)
c.c. All Chief Administrative Officers.
10th September 2001
CIRCULAR NO. 6/2001
To: Head-teachers
Government Grant-aided Secondary Schools

GUIDELINES ON HANDLING OF INDISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS

In the recent past there has been a wave of strikes, indiscipline and unrest of students in some schools throughout the country. There are a number of possible reasons to explain the cause of this situation. The causes range from increasing indiscipline of students to poor methods of school administration characterized by lack of transparency and accountability, and good governance. However, the issue of causes of unrest will be dealt with after thorough investigations have been carried out.

In this communication, I would like to deal with the way indiscipline of students and strikes is handled in schools. In many cases where strikes have occurred it has been discovered that the official procedures are not followed in handling cases of indiscipline.

I wish therefore to reiterate that:

1. Cases of indiscipline of students should be handled by ALL relevant committees in the school system and as stipulated in the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Guidelines.

2. According to the Education Act 1970 section 7, subsection 2 and the Education Board of Governors Regulations 1991 part iii-section 9 and 10, the existence, management and administration of any secondary school in Uganda must be guided by a duly appointed and operationally functioning Board of Governors. In the same Regulations part iv,
section 14 and 15, a head-teacher cannot effectively run a school without the active involvement of the Board of Governors and their relevant committees.

This is therefore to clarify:
i) That for suspensions of not more than two (2) weeks, the head-teacher may affect them without the approval of the Director of Education’s office but should do so only at the recommendation of the relevant disciplinary committees in the school.

ii) That from now on, no indefinite suspension of students should be carried out without the approval of the Board of Governors.

iii) That cases of indefinite suspension should be forwarded, with recommendations of the Board of Governors, to the Director of Education for approval. This process should not take more than one month.

Please note that for major cases of indiscipline, the head-teacher (Secretary of the Board of Governors) should call for a special meeting as is provided for in the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Governors.

May I remind you that it is an abdication of your duties to fail to submit minutes of the Board of Governors’ meetings and their relevant committees every term to the Commissioner, Secondary Education for follow up. Any head-teacher who will fail to apply these procedures will be liable for disciplinary action.

F.X.K. Lubanga

PERMANENT SECRETARY

C.C. All Chief Administrative Officers
All District Education Officers
All Chairpersons of Board of Governors

7th August 2006
CIRCULAR NO. 15/2006

To: Heads of Primary Schools
Heads of Post Primary Institutions
Heads of Tertiary Institutions
Heads of Colleges and Polytechnics

Re: BAN ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENTS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

1. The Ministry of Education and Sports has noted with great concern the increasing number of cases whereby teachers have been subjecting students to corporal punishments under the guise of disciplining the students. Whereas corporal punishment is prescribed in the Penal Code of Uganda Laws, and is usually accompanied with hard labor, the use of the cane in educational institutions is not equally governed by any law.

2. Traditional values derived from the use of corporal punishments as a deterrent and disciplining measure to be applied on growing children have been eroded through indiscriminate use of the cane. Moreover, the Children’s Rights Act prohibits values and actions that undermine the health and dignity of the children. In practice, the use of the cane has deteriorated into random and irresponsible beating of students by the teachers and fellow students. Consequently, untold injuries, physical impairments and in some cases actual death, have been caused by corporal punishments meted to students. Even the use of bare hands has at times inflicted a disability of one form or the other on the victims.

3. The following measures must be observed by all the educational institutions, be they government-aided or private.

a) Corporal punishments for students in schools and colleges must stop forthwith. This applies to meting out any other form of punishment or act that may cause injury, damage, defilement or disfigurement to the human body. The use of the cane as a disciplining
measure shall not be permitted even in Nursery Schools and infant classes. At this tender age, the children ought to be brought up in love and care rather than in brutality, violence and sadism.

c) Every educational institution should review its rules with a view of introducing more professional and acceptable sanctions to replace manual labor and caning. The Schools/ Colleges’ Boards of Governors/ Governing Councils should approve the new rules. However, the measures to be taken should not in any way disguise other forms of brutality.

d) Any disciplinary action must be recorded in a punishments book, clearly indicating the type of offence, type of punishment, authorization and the particulars of the person administering the punishment so that a regular system of records is maintained.

e) Where these guidelines are ignored or abused, the culprits will be held criminally responsible for their actions. They will have to face the law, including the Teachers’ Code of Conduct.

f) It is expected that educational institutions will develop and apply more professional and refined methods of guiding and counseling students, teachers and parents in the use of alternative forms of punishment that are geared towards positive training in attitude formation and character building of the youth. The ultimate goal of the managers of the teaching/learning process is to mold them into useful citizens.

Dr. J.G. Mbabazi

For: PERMANENT SECRETARY

C.C. All Chief Administrative Officers

All Town Clerks
All District Education Officers
All Municipal Education Officers
All District Inspectors of Schools
The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister
All Hon. Members of Parliament
Head, Public Service/ Secretary to Cabinet
Deputy Head, Public Service/ Secretary for Administrative Reform
All Permanent Secretaries
All Resident District Commissioners
All Chairmen, Local Council V
Chairpersons, District Local Council Education Committees
Secretaries of Education, District Local Councils
Chairpersons, Schools Management Committees
Chairpersons, Parents & Teachers Associations
References


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