

## Research Report

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**Title of Research:**

**Education Reforms and Human-Environment Coexistence in Uganda: One leg in, One Leg Out**

**Purpose of Research:** (400 words)

As the subtheme of this research suggests “one leg in, one leg out”, I sought to understand the partial adoption of western formal educational values that were introduced in 1800s by Europeans to their African spheres of influence (of course in combination with other aspects of semi-industrial and modernizing projects) and how this carries with it the damaging effects to peaceful and regenerated socio-environmental processes. While studying environment and its catastrophic turn in the name of climate change, we have tended to popularize universal conceptions to explain and mitigate its effects. More so, until recently like many aspects of world conflicts, environment has solely been left a reserve for environment experts and academicians especially in most African countries particularly Uganda a case I want to emphasize. Given the population bulge to unbearable proportions in many African nations in recent decades, its imperative to give education a closer analysis to enable responsible world occupation.

The main purpose of this research process was to bring the state back in when issues associated with environment emerge. The states have a significant role of providing education on optimal use of the natural resources and promotion of co-existence of mankind in the ecosystem. So far, there have been conflicting paradigms: One making the North a palpable threat to environment. This school has argued that the North has a responsibility to regenerate the environment they have destroyed with carbon emissions produced by industrial complex. The other paradigm is one that emphasizes the eminent role of transnational organizations such as the United Nations. All these paradigms have treated the states in the South as victims of North’s projects of environmental destruction.

To elucidate the relationship between education and environment, the research objective was premised on a puzzle such as, although formal education in the west and else where in Asia could be the main culprit of environmental/ greenhouse catastrophe accounting for the major part of global warming, how can improvements in the education systems in African nurture environmental regeneration? To answer this puzzle, I attempted to explain how partial formal education integration changed the social and economic systems that could have indirectly facilitated damage to environment’s survival. Then I gathered perception on; how education system can be improved, and two the perception of the research subjects on their relationship with environment.

The outcomes of the research are intended to change educational institutional mentality to enable communities in the South to cope with 21st century challenges including climate change. Also, I sought to increase awareness to the international community on the areas that require trans-national cooperation and humanitarian support.

**Content/Methodology of Research:** (800 words)

Grounded on the Sociological institutionalism that treats norms and values as important aspects in understanding social processes, I argued that the optimal and effective use of the environment majorly depends on the nature of education given to the nation occupying such a nation. Taking a statist stance, the education is a responsibility of the state. The unwillingness or inability of the state to provide

quality education to its citizens may culminate into severe vulnerability and the environment is the victim to this social reality. I mainly triangulated qualitative methods of research to achieve rigor. To establish the missing gap in the existing literature on the education, I explored empirical and theoretical studies on education and environment as well as studies on education sector reforms.

To gain a deeper description, informal interviews with the Makerere university students interested in education as a career, the education officials at the ministry of education, tutors and the teacher trainees at Kibingo primary teachers' college, some head teachers/ deputy head teacher/ directors of studies of primary and secondary schools were conducted. Also the general University students on their perceptions of the education system in Uganda in relation to environmental protection. For all the interviewees, I investigated their understanding of environmental issues and how they perceive their coexistence in the ecosystem. The study in general treated partial formal education as equally dangerous to coexistence as complete illiteracy. Partial formal education is the kind of distorted education premised on western education system.

Interviews held with head teachers were intended to examine their vision for the education system they work for. Guiding informal questions were asked such as; how do you perceive the formal education system in Uganda today? What would you love changed in the formal education system? How does this education improve students' understanding of environment and its regeneration? How do you perceive regeneration? What is your strategy for environment in your education system? What is the future of formal education in relation to emerging population challenges? All these questions direct to the disconnect between education and regeneration.

Interviews with tutors at the primary teachers' college were to establish the teaching models and standards. The interviews with this category of respondents were intended for the understand of how they entered the profession, and how they have transformed overtime. My interest among these respondents was those that have worked for more than 20 years as well as those within 5 years of service. The rationale for this work experience selection was to establish the commonalities between the two categories as well as the differences in the way they perceive education reforms of the past as well as present. In addition, similar guiding questions as those administered on the primary and secondary schools' administrators were asked.

Interviews with teacher trainees were to help me understand the motivation for entering the teaching as a career, the requirements for joining teacher-training college and bottlenecks of the teacher-training system. Considering that teachers' colleges are professional colleges, the highest possibility is that students will become teachers. I asked questions like; How did you decide to become a teacher? Did you have any other career you had in mind before enrolling for teacher training that you considered best suited? If yes, was there any reason that could have hindered you from joining your most desired career? Would you continue to pursue other studies after getting a job? What do you find challenging in the education system? What is the minimum qualification to qualify for teacher training course? These questions were to help me understand the intricate issues around the teacher-trainees' recruitment process and how this process is vital in the articulations surrounding the education reforms.

Interviews with University students on education training were to help me figure the discrepancies that exist between teaching colleges and University level teacher training. The major dilemma here was the fact that, as the population exploded in Uganda from 5 million in 1970s to 40 million in 20i8, there has been a progressive admission of undergraduate education students in universities. However, the system has since colonialism not adjusted to allow for students after universities to access jobs in primary and secondary schools. Guiding questions leading to understanding their integration in education as a career were asked

The interviews with ministry of education officials were to examine the national education policy, how it is planned, implemented and transformed. This was primarily to bring out the policy enactments and dilemmas around education reforms. How constrained does the education ministry feels in its reform efforts

In addition, I engaged the print media on education-related articles and columns. Here I was mostly interested in the general expert views associated with educational reforms in Uganda and in Africa generally. What is the expert (both national and internal) opinion on education reforms?

## **Conclusion/Observation** (400 words)

There was no direct nexus between partial formal education/ poor education system and environmental degradation cited. However, from the various interviews, the environmental destruction was perceived as unintended outcome of poor population planning and integration of which education sector is guilty as charged. There was a direct relationship between poor education system and contemporary social problem that make coexistence rather difficult. Such Contemporary problems mean and include poverty, rural and urban unemployment, economic inequalities all of which are recipes for environmental exhaustion. Mostly all the respondents agree that students spend most of their productive age in formal education and finish with limited skills and employability.

The study also established that, there is a significant number of teachers who join primary teachers' colleges because they could not meet the academic requirements to proceed beyond Junior High School. Some students joined the teachers' college because they could not afford school fee to proceed to advanced high school and University. This puts the quality of teaching less than the normal standards in the developed world where primary teachers must possess at least a master's degree.

Education has a lifetime impact on the persons' behavior. The education that only emphasizes 'literacy' and not 'creativity' is likely to endanger development processes. Almost all the respondents agreed that what is in Uganda (and most countries with similar characteristics) is 'educating without training'. Although all schools emphasize religious values, just a handful is emphasizing environmental values, or other values associated to development. All the respondents agree that the education systems' vision is still colonial in nature and still treats formal education as a part of a life cycle and not a stage important for human transformation.

The findings brought to light the educational institutional deficiencies of reform efforts to cope with the changing society. While the population in Africa continues to bulge, the survival challenges continue to worsen. The Youth Bulge in Uganda is indeed worrying and worse with poor education strategies. It is obvious that the solutions to this escalating problem will be located in the appropriate education system reforms. A lot needs to be done in restructuring the administration of education for example not only raising the qualifications for primary and secondary school teachers to University degree level and to masters' degree progressively but also curriculum change to suit the needs of the changing society. Efforts to fully integrate formal education to improved skills and knowledge acquisition could reduce escalating vulnerability adversely affecting environment.