

Report on Organizing the ROSE Survey In UGANDA

Mulemwa N. Jane, mulemwa@utlonline.co.ug, Education Service Commission (ESC), 15th March 2004

ROSE team

The Ugandan ROSE team consists of only two people, Dr. Jane N. Mulemwa and Dr. Silas Oluka who is the Ag. Head, Department of Science and Technical Education (DOSATE), Makerere University.

School system and science teaching

The Ugandan school system has 12 years, none of which are compulsory so far. These are categorised into 3 distinct levels of education and learners have got to sit for a qualifying and centralized National Examination. The first level is the Primary School level of 7 years with classes 1-7 and leading to the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) at the end of it; followed by 4 years of lower secondary school with the award of an Ordinary Level (“O” Level) Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE); and then 2 years of Higher or Advanced Level (“A” Level), leading to the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE). The “A Level examination is the main qualifying examination for entry to the University, following this single track system of education. Children are expected to start at school at the age of 6, and should therefore be aged 13, 17 and 19, at the start of “O”, “A” and University levels of education, respectively. The school system consists of Day and Boarding schools where the most Boarding schools are single sex whereas the Day schools are mixed or co-educational. The Government policy now is to encourage Day schools because they are more affordable and hence more children can enrol into schools. While there very many languages and directs spoken in Uganda, the official language is English. The Government policy allows formal instruction in the Mother tongue of the area at the primary school level while English is being taught as a subject, but only from primary 1-4 after which all instruction should be in English.

School is neither completely free nor compulsory. In 1997, Uganda introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE), but with a small modification. Due to the scarcity of resources, the UPE policy started then by catering for only 4 children per family, and even then, the parents and guardians were expected to make some small material contributions towards the education of their children, in the form of providing lunch and stationery for them. In implementing this policy it was very difficult to send children away from school if more than 4 turned up per family. Therefore, in reality, all those who wanted to go to school accessed the UPE schools regardless of the policy. The policy has now been revised to include all school-age going children. Despite this policy however, there are still many children who do not go to school mainly due to 2 reasons. First is the ignorance of the value of education where by parents and guardians fail to send their children to school. The second reason is failure of parents/ and guardians to provide for the few basic requirements of school such as

lunch, stationery and a school uniform for their children, due to poverty at the household levels. Therefore there is a high dropout rate from school as well as repeaters at the different class levels due to poor performance. Otherwise, the curriculum at the primary school level consists of 4 compulsory subjects that must be offered at PLE, namely, English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. The Science subject consists mainly of aspects of nutrition, hygiene, and agriculture while that of Social Studies combines elements of civic education, history, geography, and religious education.

The school fees are relatively very high at the secondary and other post-primary institutions, resulting in relatively very few students attaining formal post-primary education. The University level education is no longer free except for a small minority of Government-sponsored students. At the Ordinary level of secondary education, the science subjects are compulsory by policy, for the first 2 years, after which they become optional. However, this policy cannot be strictly enforced since Government cannot provide adequate resources for all Government-aided schools to teach sciences. Consequently, some schools do not offer all the basic science subjects and many students opt out of science as soon as possible. Otherwise, a student studies at least 17 different subjects in senior 1 and 2, and has to offer 10 for the final examination, consisting of 8 core and 2 optional subjects. At the advanced level, candidates have to start specialization by clearly choosing to pursue either a Science-based or Arts- based combination of 3- 4 subjects.

The Religious- based organization play a vital role in the education system in Uganda, founding and running some of the best schools in the country. The schools are however obliged to admit students from religious dominations other than their own, if they are government –aided. While it is not a policy to stream students according to performance, this tends to be the case in most schools, the argument being that they can be assisted better. The class sizes can be quite big in urban areas and small in some rural schools where the schools may be far and apart and yet have no boarding facilities. At the secondary school level, the class sizes range from about 60 in the urban areas to about 25 in the rural remote areas. To date, there are hardly any specialized schools children with special learning needs. There are a few schools for the deaf and the blind and none for any other special needs. The new Government policy is for integration of these learners into the ordinary schools, but with teachers who have been specifically trained to assist them. However this policy has yet to be effected at any considerable levels.

Translation

The original version of the ROSE instrument was in English and therefore no translation was needed in Uganda, where English is the official language of communication and instruction.

National questions

We did not add any items apart from a few background variables, of type of school (single sex girls or boys or mixed; day/boarding) and its location (rural/urban and which part of the country).

Piloting

The questionnaire was used in its original form without any piloting.

Official permission

As a national requirement, we had to register the research project with the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST). We also sought the support of the Ministry of Education, not necessarily as a requirement but more so as a way of ensuring that the schools would take the research seriously and ensure the administration and return of the questionnaires. We therefore wrote a circular letter to the Head teachers of all participating schools, which was endorsed by the Commissioner of Secondary Education, Ministry of Education, showing their support.

Population

The ROSE target population in Uganda was the cohort of 15-year-old pupils studying in our country in December 2002. This group of students is generally in Senior 3 at the lower secondary school level, and this was the targeted class level. However, there were explicit instructions to ensure that only those who had turned 15 year but not yet 16 were to fill in the questionnaires.

Sample and participation

The Uganda ROSE team wanted to take cognisance of some key characteristics of our education system as research variables, while obtaining a sample that would be representative of the different major cultures of the country. We therefore sampled from 5 geographical regions of the country, namely the north, south, east, west and central parts of the country. The traditional 4 regions generally represent different cultural groupings while the central region which also includes the capital city, is cosmopolitan in nature. Within each region, we planned to compare rural/urban schools; day/boarding schools that were single sex boys or girls, as well as schools that were known to perform well or poor in the national “O” level examinations. The good performing schools are generally very well known as the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC) publishes them each year when the results are released. This categorization resulted in us targeting a total of 12 schools per region, making 60 schools per country and hence 1,800 questionnaires could be expected in total.

Data collection in schools

We received a grant of – from Prof. Svein Sjoberg to assist us in conducting this research survey. However, these funds were not enough to enable a completely random sampling of districts and schools, or to administer all the questionnaires personally. I took direct responsibility for the data collection from the schools in the central and southern regions, and the other team member took direct responsibility for the eastern region. For the other regions, we relied on District Education Officers (DEOs) whom we knew and asked them to administer the questionnaires in their respective districts. This meant that only one or two districts in a region were sampled and that only the easily accessible schools could participate

in the study. Therefore, the typical rural schools that are over 15km from any town canters may not have been properly represented in the sample.

Copies of the questionnaire were delivered to the DEO by hand or by courier in packets of 30, for each of the different schools identified. Enclosed too was a letter requesting for their assistance in delivering and ensuring the administration of the questionnaires in the schools and their return to us. We also talked to the DEOs on telephone to ensure understanding of the request and the instructions. The DEOs were allowed to include other schools as they found appropriate, in case they were unable to work with those identified. Therefore, we cannot be sure as to how many school were approached. There were also written instructions to both the DEOs and the heads of schools as to how to go about selecting the sample and getting the questionnaires filled. The instructions to the Heads of schools clearly stated that a total of 30 students were to be randomly chosen to participate in the study. Where there were more than one stream of S. 3, a random sampling of the 15 year olds was to be made such that about equal numbers were to be taken from each stream so as to make up a total of 30 respondents only per school. The respondents were all to sit in one room and fill in the questionnaires and the time indicated was about 1 hour. The survey was to be done in the third school term, by November 2002 before the end of the school year.

The questionnaires were collected after a few days or returned either by the head teachers or by courier. We received filled questionnaires from 29 schools giving a total of 836 coded questionnaires. The sample was representative enough to provide valid results.

Feedback and experiences

We have not attempted to contact the schools for any feedback. I thought that I could send the schools a synthesis of the findings at an appropriate time, when the analysis has been completed.

Coding (also of the open-ended I question)

I hired a social science researcher and gave him possible variables of interest like the urban-rural divide, and gender. He then coded the data into Excel and SPSS data files according to the guidelines in the "ROSE Handbook". These were sent to the Coordinating ROSE team at the University of Oslo, Norway in November 2003. The coding of the open-ended questions were done later by the same person, and in a separate file, based on the file provided by Prof. S. Sjoberg, the overall ROSE Coordinator, on his home page.

Kampala, March 16, 2004

Jane N. Mulemwa