

**EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN LITERACY PRACTICES, THE  
RURAL-URBAN DIMENSION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE  
OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN IGANGA  
DISTRICT, UGANDA.**

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**KEY WORDS**

Acculturation

Education

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Rural

School

Uganda

Urban



## **ABSTRACT**

**R.F. KIRUNDA**

Drawing on Wagner's observation that in the Western research literature remarkably little attention has been devoted to the rural-urban dimension of the educational achievement in general, and to literacy in particular (Wagner 1993: 115), this study investigated the imbalance between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements in Uganda. Observation shows that the rural learners in Uganda in general do not perform as well in their academic tasks as the urban learners do. This is raising concern in Uganda, especially among the rural parents. This calls for efforts to establish the causes of the imbalance and finding possible means for bridging the gap between the rural and the urban learners. I limit the current study to rural and urban primary schools in the Iganga district in Uganda.

This study believes that the literacy practices, to which a child is exposed, among other factors, have a role to play in that child's academic performance. This is embedded in the New Literacy Studies. New Literacy Studies (NLS) posit that the kinds of literacy practices a child is acculturated into influence that child's academic achievement (Machet, 2001; Gee, 1990; Banda, 2000, 2003; Barton, 1999; Street, 2001, 2003).

This study aims at establishing and analysing the literacy practices in the rural and urban communities and their effect on the academic achievements of learners. It also aims to establish the impact of other factors, such as the exposure to the language of examination, the level of parents' formal education and the quality of parental mediation in their children's academic work, which could be responsible for the imbalance between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements. This study endeavours to establish that the literacy practices in urban areas prepare learners for

schooled and global literacies while the literacies in rural areas are too ‘localised’ and thus impoverish the learners’ initial literacy development. This study also seeks to determine the extent to which the current language policy in education in Uganda favours the urban learners at the expense of the rural learners as far as the acculturation into and acquisition of the schooled and global literacies are concerned.

I scrutinise and discuss literacy practices along three dimensions: those in the rural homes, those in the urban homes and those in the schools, and I compare the rural and urban schools. I analyse the impact of literacy practices found in learners’ homes, communities and schools, the exposure to language of academic discourse, the quality of mediums of instruction and the stakeholders’ views, attitudes and ideologies on learners’ performance. I do this in order to establish whether they have a differential effect on rural and urban learners’ academic performance. I also scrutinise the effect of socio-economic factors on the learning processes in primary schools in the Iganga district in Uganda.



Emulating studies in NLS such as Hill & Parry (1994); Baynham (2001, 2000); Baynham & Massing (2000); Street (2000, 2001, 2003) this study follows a qualitative approach. I used observation, interviews, focus groups and document analysis as my methodological tools for collecting data because they facilitate a comprehensive thematic analysis of literacy practices in place in rural and urban areas.

The data is analysed using two theories: the New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). NLS is used to evaluate the literacy practices as identified in the school and the home communities and contexts, as social practice. Assuming that ‘literacy’ is not a neutral concept, NLS is supported by a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework in order to analyse the biases arising from institutions and policy, and the respondents’ views, attitudes and ideologies. CDA also helps me

analyse the interaction of texts (such as those generated by interviews) with the practice in rural and urban contexts. The context here also includes social power relations and the influence of institutions and ideology on individual life histories (Fairclough, 1992b, 1993, 2000). In essence, the adopted frameworks enable me to gather, correlate and compare rural and urban literacy practices data, and the data provided by the written texts (such as the language in education policy), literacy artefacts, to be interpreted/constructed in literacy events) and respondents' accounts in the form of oral texts (which reveal their attitudes, ideologies and values) to be understood (Banda, 2003; Banyham, 2000).

Results of this study show that the urban areas are rich in academically oriented and supportive home and schooled literacy practices. The urban learners have access to supportive parental mediation, good facilities and an abundance of literacy artefacts both in the home and school communities. These enhance the learners' education process. The results also show that the literacies found in the rural areas are very few and mostly non-academic. There are insufficient facilities, hardly any literacy artefacts, both in the home and school communities, and the learners have no access to supportive parental mediation that can aid their academic progress.

The findings of this study suggest that there is a problem with the quality of acculturation into supportive literacy practices, especially for the rural learners who are mainly exposed to oral literacies while their urban counterparts are exposed to both oral and written literacy practices. This spells almost a perfect match for the urban learners in that they have quality access to both the oral and written modes which are vital for the education process and it spells a mismatch for the rural learners who have access basically only to the oral mode. The Ugandan education system demands that learners should have quality exposure to both literacy modes to be able to cope with the rigours of examination. In addition, the findings identified a perfect match for the urban learners in that they use English in their homes and at

school. English is the language of the academic discourse in Uganda. All national examinations are written in English. But the rural learners use Lusoga at home and, for a long time, in school (almost up to P 6). This mismatch in the medium of communication and instruction and the language of academic discourse spells peril for the rural learners and contributes to their poor performance.

The findings also indicate there are problems with the quality of instruction stemming from the enormous classes, lack of resources, facilities and materials, and poorly motivated teachers in the rural areas, as compared to small classes, sufficient resources and materials, good facilities, and well-motivated teachers in the urban areas.

The fact that this study deals mainly with the social issues and literacy practices that could aid learning in two dichotomous settings differentiates it from many others which, for the obvious reasons of promoting mother tongue education, have concentrated on English versus first languages as mediums of instruction. This study is also differentiated from other studies carried out in Uganda, which mainly deal with adult literacy (Gossen, 2003; Mondo, 2003) as opposed to child literacy, which is the focus of the current study.

The current study concludes that the kind of literacy practices in place, the quality and quantity of acculturation and scaffolding that is done, the parental and teachers' mediation are crucial for children's initial literacy development, as well as for the success of the subsequent learning process. The environment needs to be conducive for sustained and meaningful learning to take place. This implies the need for availability of facilities and materials in sufficient quantity and quality, and it implies that learners get meaningful guidance which can enable them to become competent language users. In this regard learners need to be taught right from the home that

language is the basic tool they need for building functionally relevant meanings. Language is a basic resource with which to organise and build the world, and is thus a fundamental part of the education process. This means a serious need to intensify the quality of learners' (specifically the rural learners') exposure to language and particularly to the language of the academic discourse (mother tongue and/or English), to the grammar, sentence structures and meaning. There is also a need to find out how all these can be used to help improve the learners' work (Poynton, 1990; Christie, 2005).

This study suggests that there is an urgent need to narrow the gap between the rural and the urban learners. It recommends that the language policy in education be revised so that it portrays equitable conditions for all learners. It also suggests that the poverty situation in the rural areas needs to be addressed so that the rural schools can have facilities and materials that can enhance more learning than what takes place at the moment. Rural parents need to be sensitised so that they can find ways of acculturating their children into academic literacy practices. This can be done through adult literacy education for the parents and parent-teachers' associations working closely together. There is also a need to improve on the local literacies found in the rural areas so that they can be enriched with global literacies. This could be done through the introduction of solar powered internet villages in rural areas so that the children can have access to the computer skills and related technical global skills that most children in urban areas take for granted.

November 2005

## DECLARATION

I declare that *Exploring the Link Between Literacy Practices, the Rural-Urban divide Dimensions and Academic Performance of primary school learners in Iganga district in Uganda* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

SIGNED:



**REBECCA FLORENCE KIRUNDA**

SUPERVISOR

**PROFESSOR FELIX BANDA**

NOVEMBER 2005

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my parents:

Mikaya Kitimbo Waiswa and Joyner Wotali Waiswa

To

My husband: Chris

And to my loved ones

Solomon, Victoria, Robert, Joy, Zion and Victor.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CALP	-	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CDA	-	Critical Discourse Analysis
DEO	-	District Education Officer
G111	-	Grade Three teachers hold a Grade Three Teacher's Certificate
Govt	-	Government
GV	-	Grade Five teacher / one who has a Diploma in Education
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HTR	-	Head teacher
L1	-	First language, mother tongue or Lusoga
L2	-	English
LEP	-	Language in Education Policy
L-L	-	Learner-Learner
LOE	-	Language of Examination or Language of Education
L-T	-	Learner-Teacher
MDD	-	Music Dance and Drama
MOES	-	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOI	-	Medium of Instruction
MOIs	-	Mediums of Instruction
MT	-	Mother Tongue
MTs	-	Mother Tongues
NCCRD	-	National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development
NCDC	-	National Curriculum Development Centre
NLS	-	New Literacy Studies
P 1, P 2	-	Primary one Primary two ...Primary seven
PLE	-	Primary Leaving Examination
TASO	-	The Aids Support Organisation
T-L	-	Teacher - Learner

TR	-	Teacher
TV	-	Television
UACE	-	Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education
UCE	-	Uganda Certificate of Education
UNEB	-	Uganda National Education Board
UNESCO	-	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation
UPE	-	Universal Primary Education



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1: Background to the study

##### Uganda's panorama

Uganda is one of the countries in East Africa. It is bordered by Tanzania and Rwanda to the south, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Sudan to the north and Kenya to the east. It has a land surface of 241,139 square kilometres. It has several fresh water lakes, including Lake Victoria which it shares with Kenya and Tanzania, and from which the River Nile starts its 6695 kilometres journey to the Mediterranean Sea.



Uganda has 56 districts and all of them have both rural and urban settings. The Iganga district, where this study is located, is in the east of the country in the Busoga region. The Busoga region has five districts (Busoga Kingdom 2004). The Iganga district is about 150 kilometres east of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. By 2002 the Iganga district had a population of 714,635 and was ranked 10<sup>th</sup> of the 56 districts (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

In the 2002 national census the population of the whole country was recorded to have been above twenty-four million (24.7m). The same census report indicated that 88% of the Ugandan population lived in rural areas. Uganda's population is fragmented into many ethnic groups, each with its own language and culture. According to Kigongo-Bukenya (2003) and Wairama (2001) Uganda has fifty-six documented linguistic groups. In the last national census the Baganda, who speak Luganda, were the largest ethnic group. They were over four million (4.3m). The Basoga (Lusoga

speakers) were two million (2m.), although a more recent source estimates them to be about 2.7 million people (Busoga Kingdom 2004). The Iteso (Ateso speakers) were about two million (2m) and Banyankole (Runyankole speakers) were about nine hundred thousand (900,000). The remaining fifty-two linguistic groups made up the fifteen million.

Many of the Ugandan languages are further divided into dialects. Many of these dialects are similar, but there are some that are so different that they are almost unintelligible even to people said to be from the same linguistic group (SIL International 2005). History has it that in the past people generally stayed within their ethnic boundaries, but with the coming of education, trade and globalisation this has long changed. This change resulted in a need for a unifying medium of communication.

Uganda first came into contact with the non-local literacy through missionaries in 1876. These were Christian missionaries who came to spread the gospel. They taught people about both the Catholic and Anglican religions, and these two religions always competed for converts (The Church Partnership Team, 2005). The missionaries introduced reading and writing to the natives but greater emphasis was laid on reading because the converts, (especially the Anglican converts) had to learn to read the Bible and prayer books. The missionaries introduced this kind of literacy in the Luganda language and, based on the English alphabet, they developed the orthography of that language. They used the Luganda to spread religion and reading to the other parts of the country. To be baptised, converts had to be able to read the Bible in Luganda. In addition, a few natives learnt English. These included those who worked for and those who worked with the missionaries. A few years later in the late 1890s, the missionaries introduced formal education in Uganda, but for a long time it was the preserve of a very small group.

When the British took Uganda as their protectorate at the time of the scrambling and partition of Africa in 1894, they introduced many new arrangements. Among these was the opening up of formal education and the English language to more people. They also built administrative centres (Mpuga, 2003). These administrative centres gradually developed into the present day towns or urban centres with more infrastructure than the rural areas. They provided employment opportunities for the whites and the few natives who came up through the new education system that had been set up.

The introduction of formal education brought about many changes, which included the need to train local teachers. The teachers were to provide the labour force, which was imperatively required in the spread of education. They were needed especially to handle the lower primary classes. This was so because the British preferred using the local languages in the lower classes in all their colonies (Obanya, 1992: 3; Bamgbose, 2000: 48). This was also the case in Uganda.



Colonialism was another force that introduced the English language to Uganda. Until the 1960s English used to be taught as a subject from the third year of primary school (P 3), but it is now used as a medium of instruction in urban primary schools from the first year of primary school (Primary 1 or P 1), and in all secondary schools and tertiary institutions. It is the language of the academic discourses in Uganda.

It is important to note that from its inception English was portrayed and embraced by the people as a superior language, the knowledge of which earned one both respect and admiration (Kwesiga 1994: 61) and also spelt many job opportunities. This did not only happen in Uganda but has also been noted in many other countries such as Zambia (Banda, 1996: 111) and Nigeria (Fishman, 1989: 467). Over time, English has maintained this high status in Uganda, and there, like in many other parts of the world, it has increasingly come to be perceived as the language of wider communication, the language of the market and globalisation, as well as the language

of the new world order (Banda, 1996, 2003; Fairclough, 1992b, 2000; Schmied, 1991). Underscoring this point, Banda observes:

In most sub-Sahara Africa countries a person can only get government employment if they can demonstrate knowledge of English or French, and the minimum requirement for entry in institutes of higher learning is usually a credit in the University of Cambridge overseas examinations or its equivalent (Banda, 1991, 1996: 117).

Thus, while literacy and/or education have for a long time been perceived as derived from the education setting so that they become what is taught in school – reading and writing in a particular ‘teacherly’ way (Baynham, 2001; Hasan, 1996; Street & Street, 1991) in Uganda, to some extent, both literacy and education include knowing English. This means listening to English and understanding what is said, speaking it with ease, reading and comprehending what is read and writing correctly. The question here is: what impact has English (particularly as a global language) had on the literacy practices in the rural and urban areas? To what extent does English contribute to the ever-widening of the gap between the rural and the urban population?

It is noteworthy that English is the *de facto* language of content and subjects in primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. All textbooks are published in it. Besides, in Uganda, one cannot enter University without a credit in English. Moreover, as already mentioned above, English in Uganda, like in other Anglophone countries, is perceived as a language of power and a gateway into the employment market.

This has had a serious impact on the whole education system in Uganda. It also raises questions in the minds of parents and very much so among teachers, who are the implementers of the syllabus and the language in education policy. Some of the

questions that have been raised to this effect include: if learning using mother tongue has to stop in P 4 (as required by the language in education policy, see section 1.3 about the language policy) why must it be stressed that much? Why should mother tongue be designated for only the rural children? Why cannot more of the time spent on the mother tongue be spent on learning English, which the rural learners do not know and yet need so badly, especially when writing examinations? Bearing in mind the fact that the national Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) is done in P 7, are the three years (from P 5 to P 7) enough to give the rural learners the linguistic knowledge, the skills and cognitive development needed for the effective self-expression in English required by the rigours of examination? Are those three years enough to bring the rural learners to the same linguistic level in the academic discourse as the urban learners?

These questions become pertinent against the background, as noted above, of the urban learners starting their education in English from P 1 and many of them from the pre-primary education years. Observations arising from examination results indicate that they perform much better than the rural children. Does this support the scholarly arguments that exposure to the language of academic discourse is vital in the education process (Crookes and Schmidt 1991; [NCCRD] 2000)? This could imply that the urban learners' early start with English gives them a huge advantage over rural learners. But we also ask this question while being mindful of Cummins' postulation about the importance of early instruction in the mother tongue, and that knowledge can be transferred between languages (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 1994: 134-135). What seems apparent is the fact that this does not really happen in the Iganga district in Uganda, because other factors militate against rural learners' chances of performing well both in primary and in higher education.

This study acknowledges the importance of the mother tongue in laying the linguistic foundation for learning any other language, for grasping concepts and as a critical

mode for developing one's identity. The importance of mother tongue was underscored as far back as 1953 when UNESCO argued that:

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium (UNESCO, 1953: 11).

Based on such assumptions, many of the studies in this field, (such as Baker, 1994: 134-135 and Cummins, 2000) have implied that starting education in children's mother tongue puts those children at a great advantage, as they can easily transfer the learnt concepts into other languages as the education system may demand of them. However, while those studies focus on the importance of, and advocate for the use of mother tongue in education, the major issue with which the current study deals, which distinguishes it from most previous studies, is that it focuses on whether rural learners (like those in Uganda) who start their education using the mother tongue actually benefit from it. If so, how? If not, why? Thus, it should be understood that learning English and in English may be a factor, but it is not necessarily a sufficient factor to explain the academic imbalance that exists between the rural and urban learners in Uganda. Thus, in addition to investigating literacies in English this study probed other factors that might be responsible for the observed imbalance. The main concerns of this study lay with the fact that the rural learners in the Iganga district are not performing well even after learning in Lusoga for the first four or more years of their education. This study scrutinises the disparities in the qualities of acculturation and the modes of instruction that prevail in the rural and urban areas in the Iganga district. It posits that these are embedded in the environmental factors, which are played out in the huge classes, the lack of resources, facilities and materials, and the

poorly motivated teachers in the poorly managed schools in the rural areas in contrast to the small classes, the sufficient resources and materials, the good facilities and the well-motivated teachers in the efficiently managed schools in the urban areas.

The gist of this study, therefore, was to scrutinise the literacy practices in place in the rural and the urban areas regardless of the language in which they exist. The main task was to identify the practices in each community and examine how they influence the children's learning processes. To do this, the study considered in detail the education system, the language policy in education in Uganda and the socio-cultural factors prevailing in rural and urban areas in Uganda.

## **1.2: The education system in Uganda**

When the missionaries introduced formal education in Uganda in the late 1890s, it was the preserve of a very small group for a long time. In 1925 the colonial government began participating in, expanding and exercising control over education, but it was not until the 1950s and the 1960s that education in Uganda began expanding rapidly (Uganda Government, 1992: 3). By the time of this study The Government White Paper on Education (1992) was the official document in place stipulating the guidelines to be followed by all stakeholders and policy implementers in matters regarding education in Uganda. The first paragraph of this document runs as follows:

Government attaches great importance to the development of education in Uganda, for it recognises the fact that education is a powerful tool for transforming society. It plays a key role in achieving moral, intellectual, ideological, cultural and social development of the people in society, as well as the national goals of unity, democracy, economic progress and security of all its citizens (Uganda Government, 1992: 1).

In light of that The White Paper articulates the following two, inter alia, as some of the broad aims of education:

1. To promote scientific, technical and cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to promote development.
2. To eradicate illiteracy and to equip the individual with basic skills and knowledge to exploit the environment for self-development as well as national development, for better health, nutrition and family life and capacity for continued learning (Uganda Government, 1992: 8).

These are noble goals worthy of all efforts. If achieved, Uganda would be a wonderful country to live in. But what is very disturbing and one of the crucial impetuses underlying this study is a very common pronouncement that usually comes early every year whenever the examination results for the previous year are released. Year after year the reports given indicate that the urban schools perform better than the rural schools. This pronouncement is common at the primary and secondary school levels of education. This becomes very disturbing especially considering that 88% of the population lives in the rural areas. What becomes apparent is that there is a very small intelligentsia that is being created by the education system from the 12% of urban dwellers within the country's population. This, inadvertently or otherwise, seems to be creating hegemony within the population where those empowered by the education system will continue being advantaged in education, politics, and in the social and economic sectors of life.

According to The White Paper, primary education should last eight years - Primary 1 to Primary 8 (P 1 to P 8), to be followed by six years of secondary education and a minimum of three years at university or two in tertiary institutions. The duration of a university course, however, depends on the course. For example, Human Medicine

and Veterinary Medicine take five years. Law, Engineering and Pharmacy take four while Education and many other courses take three years.

At the end of the eight years in primary school, pupils are supposed to write the national Primary Leaving Examination (PLE). At this level four subjects: English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies are examined.

After the first four years in secondary school another set of examinations – the Uganda Certificate Education (UCE) is done. Here, one is expected to do a minimum of eight and a maximum of ten subjects with English and Mathematics being compulsory. After UCE learners are expected to start specialising in particular subjects. And after two years they do the Uganda Advanced Certificate Education (UACE). At this level one is expected to do at least three and at most four principal subjects and General Paper as a subsidiary but compulsory subject. The subjects one takes at this level determine the course one will do at university or the tertiary institution one will go to.



However, although The White Paper was published in 1992, the recommended eight years of primary education have not yet been implemented. PLE is written after seven years, as was the case before the paper came into existence. It should also be noted that up to 1996, the parents or guardians of learners paid for all the education in primary and secondary school and at university. In 1996 the government announced the introduction of free Universal Primary Education (UPE). This became effective in 1997. But still parents/guardians have to pay for all secondary education. At university level the government sponsors only 2000 to 4000 out of 15000 – 25000 students who enter university every year. Selection of students for government sponsorship is done on merit, starting with the best candidate in the country. It should be pointed out here that the majority of the best performing students usually turn out to be learners from the urban schools who are taught in English from P 1 or their first year of study, as dictated by the government:

It (government) noted the capacity of many Ugandan children – particularly in the growing urban centres where most of the good schools are located – to learn quickly and enthusiastically when they are taught in English, even if they learn it for the first time in schools; and that children at the most malleable stage of childhood have the highest capacity of and desire to learn new languages (Uganda Government, 1992: 16).

This means that the rural learners, who do not usually excel in the national exams, can neither access places in good secondary schools nor obtain government sponsorship at university level. Thus, the parents/guardians have to continue paying for their children's education despite the fact that most of them are very poor. If the parent/guardian cannot afford to pay, then the learner either drops out of the education system completely or has to join some second rate institution, get some kind of training and then, if fortunate, find a low paying job. But even these low paying jobs are not easy to come by and many youngsters are roaming the country, searching for employment in vain. In view of the census results above therefore, it can be concluded that many of the unemployed turn out to be the rural learners who are the country's majority which is disadvantaged by the status quo. This brings into perspective the link between academic literacy, literacy practices and socio-economic factors, which is an often neglected area of research (Wagner, 1993) (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

In essence, education is very expensive in Uganda. And it is a fact (as established by this study) that many of the rural parents cannot foot the education expenses for their children, as much as they would have liked. Many parents cannot even afford to buy exercise books and pencils, let alone the textbooks, which are expensive even at the primary level. This is what makes those parents/guardians, who manage to pay for their children, feel that at the end of it all, after paying so dearly, their children should be in a position to compete for and to get good jobs, and to have a comfortable life.

But as this study demonstrates, this is a far fetched dream that cannot be achieved for the rural learners if they continue performing poorly because the education system(s), as well as the socio-economic conditions are biased against them. In other words, the rural learners who fail to proceed further with their education because their performance is 'not good enough', partly due to the lack of a conducive environment and supportive literacy practices, find themselves in the vicious circle of poverty. First, their education is denied; second, the fact that they cannot operate in English makes them functionally unemployable in the job market. The question is here to what extent the Ugandan education system and society 'reward' English and the urban learners at the expense of the mother tongue learners from the rural areas.

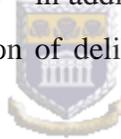
This study sought to examine the impact of this kind of education system on the parents' views, values, attitudes and ideologies about their children's education. It also endeavoured to establish what kind of influence such a system could have on the role played by parents in the acculturation, scaffolding, mediation and the development of both the rural and urban learners' literacy practices and their academic achievements, other factors notwithstanding.

### **1.3: The language in education policy in Uganda**

As already pointed out Uganda has fifty-six so far documented linguistic groups (Kigongo-Bukenya, 2003; Wairama, 2001). This state of affairs complicates the formulation, development and implementation of a working and impartial nationalistic language policy in education specifically and for the country as a whole. This has had far reaching implication for the country. According to the White Paper, the lack of a comprehensive language policy has been one of the most fundamental causes of social conflicts and economic backwardness in Uganda (p.15). The issue of the language policy has been in the mind of policy makers in all the political phases Uganda has gone through right from colonial times. Every regime has handled it in its own unique way. During the British rule efforts were made to develop Kiswahili at

national level but at the same time English was becoming entrenched in the country's systems as it was being used in administration, mass media and education. English was also gaining status as those who were acquiring it were being rewarded with well-paying employment.

Kiswahili originated from the East African coast and by the 1950s it had penetrated Uganda and was spoken by a good number of people. At that time it was officially accorded inter-territorial status for Uganda. The territories where it operated included Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and the islands along the east coast of Africa. During the 1970s Kiswahili, was widely used in the Ugandan armed forces (at that time Uganda was under military rule) and was declared to be the national language for Uganda. By the time of this study, that decree had not been repealed. In 1986 the National Resistance Council (NRC), the parliamentary body then, decided that Kiswahili would be one of the official languages – in addition to English, and would be used in the NRC. To date, not a single session of deliberation in parliament has ever been carried out in Kiswahili.



Furthermore, it should be noted that as much as it is an African language, the majority of Ugandans, especially those outside the armed forces, have not wholly embraced Kiswahili. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that, having come from the coast and brought mainly by foreigners, just like English, it lacks the grip that a native language would have. Secondly, the armed men misused it in the 1970s. It was always used in domestic violent robberies, at roadblocks and in many pain-inflicting situations to such an extent that it still carries that stigma. Thirdly, a good percentage of the population would rather learn the prestigious English.

Bearing the foreignness of both English and Kiswahili in mind it would seem obvious that Uganda would easily accept any local language, but this is complicated by the linguistic multiplicity in the country and by the fact that each ethnic group values its own language and feels that any language is good enough to be a national language.

This is why The White Paper clearly states that government is determined to prevent the development of a national language policy that is based on, and is likely to promote in society the problems of emotionalism, sectarianism, reactionary prejudices and inflexibility, and therefore likely to hinder progress (p.16). What exists today is an ambivalent situation where things are left to take their natural course. Most people tend to use any language that seems to serve their interests best in whichever situation they find themselves (see Banda, 1996 for Zambia, and Schmied, 1991, for Kenya). This has, to some extent, affected the language policy in education and has had a tangible impact on the education system as a whole. Meanwhile, the present language policy on education in Uganda stipulates, in part, that:

- (a) In rural areas the medium of instruction from P 1 to P 4 will be the relevant local languages; and from P 5 to P 8 English will be the medium of instruction. [P 8 has not come into existence to date].
- (b) In urban areas the medium of instruction will be English throughout the primary cycle.
- (c) Kiswahili and English will be taught as compulsory subjects to all children throughout the primary cycle, in both rural and urban areas...
- (d) The relevant area languages will also be taught as a subject in primary school; this applies to both rural and urban areas. However, students may not offer this subject for PLE examination... [This study established that only one of the urban schools teaches a little of the area language in P 1 only while the rural schools teach it up to P 3 and then continue using it as the medium of instruction up to P 6 and others up to P 7].

- (e) English will be the medium of instruction from senior one [the first year of secondary school] onwards (Uganda Government, 1992: 19).

[At the time of this research none of the schools visited taught any Kiswahili and this study learnt that not many schools, if any, taught it countrywide].

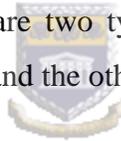
Thus, in urban areas English is used as a medium of instruction from P 1 while it is also taught as a subject. This is done partly due to the cosmopolitan nature of the population found in urban areas. Another view is that some people, especially politicians, argue that this should be the case because English plays the role of unifying all the learners. But it could also be argued that an African language like Kiswahili could also play that unifying role as well as any other foreign language (English). In any case this ‘unification’ appears to be restricted to the urban areas, and thus relegating the rural people into second-class citizens who do not have to be included in the unified population of Uganda. The use of English has also been taken on partly due to the fact that many homes in town, the middle class homes in particular, already use English as the main home language in addition to a Ugandan language (but many urban homes use it as the only language of communication within the family). One could also argue that this is the case because the policy makers and/or politicians, most of whom have their children in town, wish it to be so. This can be deduced from the government paper, which states that:

Government has considered, from a scientific point of view and with a flexible attitude, the traditional arguments concerning the ease with which children are supposed to learn in their mother tongues. Government regards the issue of language and educational instruction in a much more dynamic, realistic and progressive manner. It has noted the capacity of many Uganda children – particularly in the growing urban centres where most of the good schools are located – to learn quickly and enthusiastically when they are taught in English,

even if they learn it for the first time in schools; and that children at the most malleable stage of their childhood have the highest capacity and desire to learn new languages... (p.16).

In fact, this seems to be a complete endorsement of the English-only approach for the urban areas. The government is using the argument that children learn languages effortlessly to counter the 'traditional argument' about the importance of the mother tongue.

In the mean time, the rural learners live within their tribes, speaking their mother tongue. Obediently as it were, the most widely spoken area languages are used as the media of instruction from P 1 to P 4 while English is taught as a subject. From P 3 to P 4 code switching is allowed but from P 5 to P 7 English is supposed to be used as the only medium of instruction and in practice the area/local languages are used even up to P 7. Thus, in Uganda there are two types of school systems at the lower primary level – one that uses English and the other using the mother tongue.



From the CDA perspective such a scenario/policy is nothing short of the perpetuation of hegemony between the rural and the urban population (Fairclough, 1995, 2000). As Atkins (2002: 1) points out, CDA was developed to help analysts identify hidden socio-political inequalities that exist in society, which can lead to oppression, marginalisation and repression. McGregor (2004) adds that marginalisation, oppression and repression, go unchallenged if the text is not critically analysed to reveal the power relations and dominance therein. Fairclough explains that CDA explores how these relationships are a factor in securing power and hegemony by drawing attention to power imbalances, social inequalities and non-democratic concerns, and other injustices in the hope of spurring people into action. Using CDA, I will show that Uganda's children are divided into the two groups: the urban and the rural children, with the former given access to the language of power while denying the rural children that access, thus perpetuating socio-political inequalities,

oppression, marginalisation and repression for the rural children. The language in education policy seems to be empowering the urban learners while disadvantaging the rural learner while those behind this hidden fact pretend to be acting in the best interest of all learners.

In secondary school and post secondary institutions English is the only medium of instruction but one is free to study one local and/or one international language as a subject. Very few students, mainly in Buganda opt to study Luganda, one of the Ugandan local languages as compared to those who opt for French, German and other international languages. What raises concern here is the extent to which the language in education policy and parents' attitudes towards language, specifically English, engenders and fosters the development of the schooled literacies in urban areas, while disadvantaging the rural learners. Most of the parents and learners in the rural areas seem to be in a position where they can hardly do anything to liberate themselves. This study sought to analyse the impact of such a language policy in education on the learners to find out the extent of the differential effect it could have on the literacy practices and the academic achievements of both the rural and urban learners.

While doing this I took into consideration Holub's (1992) discussion of Gramsci's views on how language perpetuates hegemony. Gramsci argues that language is always situated in specific locations in a social and/or geographical space which contributes to its hegemony, a space from which its power disseminates, its prestige radiates, to various degrees and intensifies over and above other social class, space and regions. This becomes pertinent while considering the prestigious position English enjoys over other languages and the power it disseminates among those fluent in it.

Could all this have everything to do with the position of English in relation to the local languages, the power it disseminates and/or the prestige it radiates? Could it be the prospects and the global literacies inherent in English and its status as the

language of the academic discourse, the language of the wider communication, the language that already embodies much information and knowledge, that lie at the bottom of the government's and individuals' interests in making and implementing such a policy?

Informed by many studies, including those of Bamgbose (2000) and Baker (1994), it would appear that using Lusoga as a medium of instruction in the Iganga district would be an advantage in education, yet it turns out to be a disadvantage in Uganda. Lusoga turns out to be a disadvantage for the rural learners because the examinations are set in English. Having had little practice in the language of examinations the rural learners either fail to interpret the questions or to articulate their answers well enough to get good grades. This begs the question: why? Could it be that in the information era, where much information, including the information in textbooks and syllabus content, are packaged in English, the local languages turn out to be limiting? This could imply the need to change the way we see and do things, including the way we teach the rural children in Uganda, because the local languages seem to be detrimental to the rural learners' academic progress.

#### **1.4: The rural /urban profile**

The next issue relates to the magnitude of the rural-urban divide. It was the intention of this study to scrutinise the impact of rural-urban divide on the learners to find out the extent of the differential effect the divide has had on the literacy practices in rural and urban areas. The divide referred to in this study is determined partly by a place's proximity from Iganga town; that is the main urban area in the Iganga district and partly by the fact that most of the schools referred to as urban schools were established some years ago and have built up their infrastructure and standards over time. It should, however, be noted that there are other schools in the same urban area that were established at the same time, or even earlier which do not perform as well

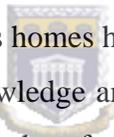
as those I have called urban schools in this study. A case in point is school C, which is very new yet it performs very well, much better than most of the old schools, which have better facilities and more teachers. Most importantly, this divide is determined by the fact that one category – referred to as the ‘urban’, outperforms the other category – the ‘rural’, in academic tasks.

Like many other countries, Uganda’s urban areas have, for a long time, been centres of attraction to the Ugandan population in general and the elite in particular because they offer more employment opportunities. This attraction is also partly because the urban areas have better social amenities and infrastructure. Hence, Uganda, just like most developing countries, has had her share of the rural-urban drift as people move to urban areas to look for employment and a better life for their families.

As if taking their lead from the language policy in education, most of the urban parents and/or guardians, educated and the middle class parents in particular, are increasingly using English at home, because of cross-tribal marriages or simply as a wish to belong to a wider communication circle, and also as a means to give their children a head start in the knowledge of English – the perceived language of education and socio-economic mobility. Using English at home and in school creates a perfect match between the language of home and the language of education. Thus, the urban children get sufficient quantity and quality of the language of the academic discourse. This puts them at an advantage and contributes to their good performance as it improves their fluency in expression, which is vital in the learning process.

On the other hand, the rural people have no choice in this matter because most of them do not know English and hence have to speak the local language to their children. The lack of practice in the language, in addition to the lack of materials written in English incapacitates the rural children’s development of some of the supportive literacy practices that accrue from reading widely to access knowledge. In essence, this creates a mismatch between the language of home literacies and the

language of education, English, in which they do the national examinations. This implies that the quantity and quality of exposure and practice they receive in the language of the academic discourse is insufficient. It ends up impinging on their performance, resulting in poor achievements. Thus, for their failure to perform as well as urban children, rural children seem to be condemned to the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder. In the process, this widens the rural-urban divide within the Iganga district population.

This study looks at urban middle class parents who are in the main working people. They have some sources of income, and thus, can afford facilities such as radios, television and newspapers. The study also looks at the impoverished rural parents who cannot afford such facilities. By analysing the typical middle class and the typical rural population I can, as I later demonstrate in this study, highlight the extreme difference between the two dichotomous categories of the population. To be noted is the fact that urban middle class  homes have facilities from which the children can gain information, enrich their knowledge and develop literacy practices. Almost all the urban children from the middle class families have access to newspapers and radios; they watch television and can talk about what they read, see and hear. In fact, the presence of reading materials such as newspapers, books, labels on food packages and on TV programmes means that the urban children have a lot to read around them. Therefore they have sufficient and quality exposure to written texts. This is a perfect match with what they find in school and it assists them in achieving initial literacy development early in their life.

On the other hand, the rural children have no access to such facilities from which they could gain information, enrich their knowledge and develop literacy practices. The rural areas have very poor infrastructure and lack many of the basic social amenities such as public libraries. The rural population is very poor for lack of employment and dependent on subsistence agriculture, which relies on the mercy of the unpredictable weather. Most parents are not educated and are too poor to afford both textbooks and

general books that would build up their home libraries. This means that the literacy practices in the urban areas are very different from those found in the rural areas. While those found in the urban areas are many and supportive to the learners' academic progress, those in the rural areas are very few and far less supportive to the learners' academic progress.

The children from the rural areas have very little, if any, access to radios. If they happen to get a newspaper, it will be one brought home by a town dweller at the weekend or month end as they come to visit their family. Televisions are still far from penetrating the rural areas because of lack of electricity and money to purchase them. Packaged foods are very rare because the rural population grows its own food for consumption and most of them are too poor to afford packaged foodstuffs. Most of the rural population still uses local herbs for treatment and when they buy medicine they do so from local drug shops where a few tablets are put in small envelopes on which the dispenser writes just the dosage like "2X3" and gives oral instructions "mira abiri emirundi esatu buli lunaku" that is to say "take two tablets, three times a day." What comes out here is that the literacies in the rural areas are mainly oral. This situation, together with the lack of the reading materials in the rural homes, gives rise to another mismatch, because the education system demands that the learners have much quality interaction with the written mode if they are to be in a position to read exam questions and write their answers to the satisfaction of the examiners. The lack of sufficient exposure to the written mode puts the rural children at a disadvantage because all the examinations in Uganda have to be completed in writing.

The situation in the rural areas, in effect, minimises reading opportunities for the rural communities, especially for the rural learners. It curtails the rural learners' chances of interacting with the written language let alone with the language of the academic discourse and with the supportive literacy practices, which accrue from access to the written language. In addition, these learners have fewer literacy events to 'debate' about amongst themselves. Furthermore, for cultural reasons, the rural children are

constrained from arguing, questioning or talking back, however politely, to parents or elders. The questions that confront this study at this stage are: are the children in urban areas acculturated into literacy practices that give them easier access to the academic discourses than the rural learners? If so, how do the two acculturation processes affect the children's learning processes? Are the learners in urban communities exposed to practices that prepare them more suitably for schooled literacies and do they utilise the community literacies more effectively than learners from rural areas? What is the impact of the lack of supportive literacy practices on the rural learners' academic achievements?

This study takes schooled literacies to mean the kind of literacies which are taught and acquired in school through reading and writing and subject content knowledge. Community literacies are taken to mean the knowledge gained from literacy practices which exist in our daily lives, for example, from listening to a voice of someone reading a written text on the radio or television as in news broadcasts, consulting a calendar, reading information brochures, making and using shopping lists. They also include the knowledge and skills gained from reading, interacting with others about, and interpreting advertisements on posters and billboards, food and medicine packs, TV and radio programmes and any other 'reading' materials in the community as a whole (Banda, 2003; Barton, 1999).

Parents' mediation in the education of their children plays a vital role in the shaping of the learning process. Bearing in mind the observation that some children are born in a world full of books and other reading materials while others encounter them in school for the first time, this study endeavoured to find out the influence of the presence and/or the lack of exposure to reading materials and parents' mediation in the children's learning processes.

## 1.5: The concept of literacy

This study acknowledges the fact that the word ‘literacy’ is fluid in the sense that it means different things to different people and in different contexts. Consequently, different people define literacy differently. Several scholars have endeavoured to define literacy. Scribner and Cole (1981: 236) define literacy as a set of socially organised practices, which makes use of a symbol system and technology for producing and disseminating those practices. They elaborate by saying that literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. This study strongly agrees with them but proposes to go a step further and point out that, indeed, literacy needs not only to encompass the ability to read and write, or to use a particular symbol system and technology for producing and disseminating those practices but should also include the ability to express oneself, listen for information, seek and gain knowledge and to use the available information, knowledge and resources to surmount the problems one might encounter in life and/or manage any venture or process as the need may arise.

In an attempt to elucidate the concept of literacy, Street (1996) reveals that according to modern schooling and many Literacy Agencies such as UNESCO, world-wide literacy is represented as a set of functional skills, the acquisition of which will automatically improve people’s cognitive functioning and equip them with greater facility of abstraction, logical thought and meta-linguistic awareness, thus making them eligible for jobs and economic success. This, he postulates, is the basic principle of the autonomous model of literacy.

According to this autonomous model, acquiring literacy in the form of ‘functional skills’ is concomitant to becoming intelligent enough to be eligible for jobs, to become progressive and to become economically well off. This is the notion of

literacy that is highly reflected in government circles in many countries. However, what happens in society does not always seem to hold that notion true, because, quite often, we encounter people which this model would acknowledge as having acquired literacy, but who cannot perform effectively even in their own areas of ‘specialty’. The fact that what the autonomous model depicts is not always true in real life situations gives rise to other views such as those explicit in the ideological model of literacy.

The ideological model of literacy views literacy from a broader and socio-culturally sensitive perspective (Gee, 1991; Besneir and Street, 1994). According to this model, literacy varies from one context to another. The ideological model posits that literacy is a social practice; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. It is also always embedded in social practices, such as those of a particular job market or a particular educational context, and the effects of learning that particular literacy will depend on those particular contexts. A comprehensive discussion of these models is done in Chapter Three.

It is on the basis of this that this study endeavours to scrutinise the literacy practices in the rural and urban settings of the Iganga district, Uganda’s language in education policy and the teachers’ and the parents’ ideologies in a bid to understand their impact on the learning process and on different learners’ academic achievements. I also look at how the factors outside the local conditions impact on the local literacies. Could it be that it is the external factors, such as the spread of globalisation and the internationalisation of English which influence the urban parents as they choose the literacy practices they have to put in place for their children? With that in mind I pause to ask: are the urban learners better tuned to take advantage of their academic-oriented background, conventional codes and ‘global literacies’ right from a tender

age and in their homes? Could the lack of all these be part of the rural learners' problems that influence their performance? The results of this study indeed seem to support this position.

### **1.6: Statement of the problem**

The problem investigated in this study stems from the observation that there is an imbalance between the rural and urban learners' educational/academic achievements in Uganda. Learners in urban schools tend to perform very well, much better than those from the rural schools (Uganda Government, 1992: 16). With the help from their home experiences and favourable conditions in the urban schools, the learners from urban schools can read and write, and do their educational/academic tasks better than those in rural areas (Wagner, 1993; Williams, 1991; Gregory and Williams, 2000). As a result they perform comparatively well in examinations, but for learners from the rural schools it is the reverse. A number of studies have shown that due to the kind of background and general lack of both parental help and supportive materials, the rural learners have difficulty even in the basic literacies skills of listening, reading, understanding what they are trying to read and expressing themselves articulately and effectively (Vernon-Feagans, Hammer, Miccio and Manlove, 2001; Strickland, 2001; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill, 1991; Baker, Scher and Mackler, 1997; Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). This has implications for two issues. Firstly, it draws attention to the learners' home background and secondly to the kind of activities that seem to surround them as they progress through their education. In essence, it directs this study towards an analysis of the home and the schooled literacy practices found in these settings: the rural and the urban, and how those literacies influence the learners' education process.

The home background here refers to the home literacy practices the child is acculturated into before going to, and while in school, and the general conditions in

the home (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven). Research shows that the acculturation process a child undergoes greatly impacts on the child's abilities, values and attitudes. The child's abilities, values and attitudes are formed by the parents' ideologies (Machet, 2001: 4). Recognising this, Street points out that good education practice today requires facilitators to build upon what the learners bring to class (Street, 2001: 14). This implies that the home background needs to provide something the facilitators can build on. If the background is good the facilitators will have an easier job. In reverse, as it is with the rural children in this study, if the children do not come with a supportive background the facilitators will have almost nothing to build on and their task will be strenuous.

The second issue is about what goes on around the learners as they progress through education. This involves what happens at school and at home and how the learners interact with what happens around them during the learning period (Barton, 1999: 148-153). This is in cognisance of the fact that much of what happens at home affects and/or supports what happens at school.

The problem investigated by this study, therefore, was how the acculturation processes which, the rural and the urban learners undergo impact on their academic achievements. Said differently, how the home literacies impact on the schooled literacy practices. Particular enquiry into this problem relates to how Uganda's language in education policy influences the acculturation and the teaching processes in the two settings.

The problem in this study also involves how the parents' educational level, their values, attitudes, ideologies and socio-cultural factors have connived to create a differential effect on the literacy practices in the rural and urban areas in which the

urban learners have easier access to the academic discourse and schooled and global literacies than learners in rural areas.

This study also seeks to find out what it is that creates a situation in which one group of learners (those from the urban areas) makes good progress while the other group (those from the rural areas) is left behind, since the unfortunate truth is that the group that is being left behind is from the rural population that constitutes the majority of the country's total population.

Thus, the problem to be investigated relates to the nexus of the literacy practices, the rural-urban divide and the academic performance of primary school learners in the Iganga district in Uganda. The problem is investigated through the analysis of the literacy practices that exist in the rural versus the urban areas in the homes versus the schools. This is to be done by investigating the literacy practices along three dimensions or strands. These will be the literacy practices found in the rural and urban schools, the literacy practices in the rural homes and those in the urban homes.

### **1.7: Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to examine some of the factors responsible for the disparity that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and urban learners in primary schools in the Iganga district in Uganda. The study was designed to evaluate the acculturation processes and literacy practices through which the learners undergo, with the aim of discovering whether the processes and the practices influence the learning processes differently along the urban-rural dimension. This study sought specifically to answer questions about the schooled and home/community literacy practices in which the Ugandan learners are involved, both in rural and urban settings, and how these practices impact on learners' performance in academic tasks.

The study also sought to explore the language in education policy and parents' ideologies and assess their differential impact on the literacy practices and consequently on the differential academic competences of rural and urban primary school learners. I intended to establish how some other factors outside 'traditional' literacies impact on the existing literacy practices. After critically analysing the causes of the imbalances, the impact of the acculturation and scaffolding processes, the language policy in education and parents' ideologies this study intends to suggest ways of bridging the gap that exists between the academic achievements of the two dichotomous groups.

### **1.8: Objectives**

From the foregoing, the objectives of this study can be summarised as follows:

1. To establish the literacy practices which the learners are acculturated into in their homes
2. To analyse the schooled literacy practices found in rural and urban schools.
3. To establish the pedagogical-didactic implications of the fact that the urban learners are acculturated into different literacy practices from those the rural learners are acculturated into.
4. To examine the impact of the language policy in education on the acculturation of literacy practices in rural and urban schools in Uganda.
5. To investigate the impact of the socio-cultural factors on rural and urban learners.
6. To establish the impact of cultural beliefs on the development of supportive literacy practices among rural and urban learners in Uganda.

7. To establish the impact of the parents' views, values, attitude and ideologies on their children's academic performance.
8. To explore the differential effect of the teachers' and parents' choice of English or mother tongue on urban and rural learners' academic performance.
9. Given the above, to establish whether the urban literacy practices position the urban learners to take advantage of developments in global literacies (e.g. those based on information technology and multimedia) better than the rural literacy practices do for the rural learners.
10. To establish what should be done to close the gap between the rural and urban learners' achievements.

### **1.9: Scope of the study**

This study was carried out in the Iganga district in Uganda. This district is located about 150 kilometres east of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. The Iganga district has both rural and urban settings. According to the 2002 census it has a population of 714,635 and is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> of the 56 districts, (Uganda Bureau of statistics, 2002). However, more recent records have it that the population of the Iganga district is about 1,067, 000 (Government 2004). The same source reports that there are 391 primary schools, 42 secondary schools, one technical institution and one teacher training college.

I chose to carry out this study in the Iganga district because it has such a high population, and the learners' PLE results have, over the years, shown a wide achievement imbalance between the rural and urban areas of the district. This study covered ten schools, five of which were rural and the other five urban. I used P 3 and P 6 classes in the selected schools to establish the impact of literacy practices at different levels (see Chapter Four for reasons). I also chose this area because I had past research experiences in this district and I was well known to the education

officer, most of the head teachers and some of the teachers. This helped to reduce the researcher effect and enabled me to access all the information I needed in a free and relaxed atmosphere.

This study focused on the learners' acculturation into schooled literacies, how it is done and its impact on the learners in the two settings. I analysed the acculturation processes both at home and at school. I did this through classroom observation and home visits in which I closely observed what goes on in the classrooms, the schools and in the homes and linked it to the learners' participation in class and their academic achievements. I also focused on the global literacies such as those based on information technology and multimedia and their impact on the learning process in the two settings.

I examined the language in education policy and the teachers' and parents' values, attitudes and ideologies to find out how these impact on both the acculturation and the learning process of the learners. Thus, the scope went beyond the problem of English versus mother tongue as a medium of instruction as most studies on language in education policy on Africa have done. This study went further and also analysed the impact of social and cultural values on the schooled practices and their influence on learners' achievements.

### **1.10: Significance of the study**

This study is significant to the learners, teachers, head teachers, teacher trainers, parents, language researchers, policy makers and implementers. This is so because records of PLE results (see Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 in Chapter Five) indicate a very wide gap between the performance of the rural and urban learners. This implies that if the situation is not addressed, Uganda will end up with two sets of citizens living within different ideologies, which will deeply entrench conflicting power relations

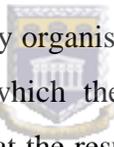
and hegemony where a small urban-bred minority will dominate the rural bred disempowered majority. Clearly, something needs to be done to bridge the gap so that the education system can empower the rural people more than it seems to be doing at the moment. Doing something about the situation begins by acknowledging the fact that there is a problem. This is what this study has done. Stubbs (1980) points out that if people and things are repeatedly talked about in certain ways, there is a good chance that this will affect how they are thought of. The problem that needs to be repeatedly talked and thought about here is the academic disparity between the rural and urban learners. This means that if we recognise the fact that the young generation is being dichotomised by the system of education in place and that the academic gap between the two groups is widening and is in effect disastrous, we will continue thinking and talking about it as we seek solutions to abate the situation and in the long run there will be an effect. The kind of effect required here is reaction from the various stakeholders. And this reaction should be in the form of finding ways of addressing the causes of the academic achievement gap existing between the rural and the urban learners.



It is, therefore, hoped that the findings of this study would have implications for the teachers, especially those in rural schools, which would lead them to critically look at, and improve the way they go about their teaching. This is so because Street (2001) argues that the teachers need to find out which supportive literacies the learners bring with them as they join school, and use them as springboards to develop the schooled literacies that would in turn be used in the academic process. In addition, Christie (2005) informs us that language is a resource that is essential in learning and advises that there is need to acknowledge the nature of its linguistic structure and the nature of the grammar if we are to control it properly and use it to the advantage of the learners. This implies that if we are seeking to help the learners in their academic endeavours, then the use of language is one literacy we need to revisit, especially for the rural learners, because they need this tool not only during their learning process but also when writing the examinations through which their academic achievements

are evaluated. The rural teachers will make efforts to find out what is happening elsewhere and see how best they can incorporate it into their teaching to help their learners to improve.

The urban teachers will also benefit in that they will seek to knit a closer a relationship between the home and the school, which will enhance the learning process. And above all, all the teachers will be enlightened and get to know the importance of the global literacies in enhancing academic achievements of the learners so that they seek ways of incorporating these non-local literacies in their teaching.

Research underscores the important roles parents (and other adults) play in their children's education (Machet, 2000; Barton 1999). This is so because if they are knowledgeable and know about the school culture, they initiate the children into it. Through scaffolding and mediation they  and support the children's activities and provide the framework within which the children act (Barton, 1999: 133). Recognising these roles, it is hoped that the results of this study could impact on the parents' values, attitudes and ideologies concerning literacy, literacy practices and their children's education as a whole. The parents in the Iganga district, especially the rural ones, have in the past inadvertently tended to link literacy and the education of their children to school settings only and yet the parents and the communities have a lot to offer in terms of local literacy practices that could be beneficial to learners' academic work. It is my expectation that enlightened through this study, the parents will get closer to the teachers and head teachers, as well as become more actively involved in their children's education process. They will also get to know that the local literacies are no longer sufficient for this global world. Thus, they will be able to understand that both the present literacies and the current cultures need to evolve or be modified to embrace the global literacies for the children to learn well enough to improve their achievements and be prepared to meet the challenges of the new world order.

De Beer et al., (1998: 15) have it that the role of management is to utilise the scarce resources available, and through planning, organising, leading and controlling to create prosperity in the organisation. This study acknowledges the importance of those roles. The observation is very pertinent to what seems to be required in the rural schools in the Iganga district and in some of the urban schools where it is lacking. Hence, this study is of the view that the rural head teachers are likely to be informed and benefit from this study as they get to know the plight in their schools and seek better ways to address the loopholes in their administration, manage the meagre resources their schools have and organise the teachers as they all work towards better learner achievements.

The children growing up today are the future citizens of a country. This means that the academic improvement of all children is crucial and should be everybody's concern if any country desires to have sound and stable social, economic and political development. Consequently the poor performance of the rural children should also concern the urban head teachers. This study hopes that the urban head teachers will take up to the growing concern about the academic gap existing between the two dichotomous groups of the future citizens and find ways and means to help their rural counterparts through advice, guidance, encouragement and other means to make sure that the performance of the rural schools improves.

The Government White Paper, (1992) points out that government is determined to prevent the development of a national language policy that is based on, and is likely to promote in society the problems of, emotionalism, sectarianism, reactionary prejudices and inflexibility, and therefore likely to hinder progress (p.16). In view of the findings of this study there is need for revisiting what is on the ground if the above is to be achieved. Thus, it is the hope of this study that the policy makers and implementers will be enlightened by the findings and that this might give them a chance to reflect on and review the effectiveness of the policies now in place.

The study will also have an impact on learners' attitudes. Those in rural settings might come to realise that they can also be as good achievers as their urban counterparts. This might give them the impetus to work hard and to seek help from teachers, parents, other adults in the school and home communities and work together with colleagues as they try to improve their academic performance. The urban learners might realise that they need to reach out and help their rural counterparts in any possible way. In addition they will realise that they also need the local languages to enable them to understand their local cultures.

This study differs from most of the studies that have been carried out in Uganda in that most of the other studies such as Gossen (2003) and Mondo (2003) focus mainly on adult literacy, others like those done by Minds Across Africa School Clubs and groups (MAASC) (2001) have focused on the reading culture and gender issues while a number of others like those done by  Quality Education for Social Transformation (QUEST) (2002) have focused on developing norms against which to measure the progress of pupils at different levels of primary school and Kyeyune (2003) focused on teacher-learner in-class talk castigating the teachers' hitherto dominant role. None of those studies has endeavoured to analyse the conditions that exist both in schools and in the homes and how they impact on the literacy practices and the academic achievements of the primary school learners. It should also be noted that many studies in Africa and elsewhere (Bamgbose 2001; Baker 1994) have focused on the use of mother tongue versus English as medium of instruction and overstressed the need to use mother tongue in schools paying less attention to the fast spreading internationalisation of the English language and to the growing need for the learners to embrace the global literacies and access the vast information database that is packaged in English. It is also important to note that those studies do not focus on the actual teaching – that is the quality of teaching as this study does (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

Furthermore, related to this study are those studies that inform NLS. But the NLS studies differ from the present study in that they have 'romanticised' the local literacies without taking in account the fact that, with fast spreading globalisation, learners can no longer afford to be cocooned in local literacies, as they are likely to limit their academic achievements and the concomitant social and economic mobility and thus relegate them to the lower rungs of society. The implication of this is that amidst the current trend of issues, New Literacy Studies (NLS) is no longer sufficient in as far as the development of supportive literacy practices and enhancement of the learners' academic achievements are concerned. As Christie (2005) rightly observes, there is a need to look beyond NLS and to incorporate both the global literacies and the systemic functional linguistics to equip the learners with linguistic tools that will help them fit in the new world order. There is an imperative need to focus on equipping the learners to cope with the language of global literacies. Thus given the Ugandan context, grammatical knowledge is crucial, not only for further education, but also for access to the job market and the global economy. What is being advocated for here is the need for quality teaching and resources regardless of the language of learning and teaching. This becomes especially viable in the face of the demographic figures of the country. Uganda has a land surface of 241,139 square kilometres with a population close to 28 million.

However, this does not mean relegating local languages; rather, local languages and literacies need to be adapted. For example, they need to be presented in the written mode so that the learners can read them. But also noteworthy is the fact that until there is a change of policy, the exposure to and the knowledge of English is critical in Uganda since all the national examinations are done in English. In view of that, this study agrees that the local literacies are useful as a springboard which should be used, but it goes ahead to suggest that the teachers/educators should be open to innovations, developments and necessities of the academic rigours if the learners are to be helped to improve.

### 1.11: Research questions

1. Are urban learners acculturated into literacy practices that are different from those in which rural learners are acculturated?
2. What are the home and schooled literacy practices found in rural and urban areas?
3. How do the home, schooled and global literacy practices affect learners' academic achievements?
4. Does the language policy in education have a differential effect on rural and urban schools?
5. Does Uganda's language policy in education have a differential effect on literacy practices in rural and urban areas in Uganda?
6. Do cultural beliefs found in rural and urban schools/areas (e.g. rural children not being allowed to ask questions, while urban learners are free to engage in discussions with adults about what they see/read) impact on learners academic achievements? If so how?
7. How do socio-cultural factors in learners' homes affect their acculturation into schooled literacies?
8. How does the availability or lack of facilities e.g. libraries, academic literature both at home and in school impact on the learners' academic achievements?
9. To what extent does exposure to the language of the academic discourse, be it English, mother tongue or both, affect learners' academic achievements?
10. What kind of interaction exists between learners and teachers/parents:  
    In class?  
    At home?
11. Do rural and urban teachers interact differently with the learners?

12. Do rural and urban parents interact differently with their children?
13. Do the urban literacy practices position the urban learners to take advantage of developments in global literacies (e.g. those based on information technology and multimedia) better than the rural literacy practices do for the rural learners?
14. What should be done to close the gap between the rural and urban learners' achievements?

### **1.12: Assumptions**

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1. Acculturation into literacy practices starts in the child's home.
2. Acquired literacy practices influence academic achievement.
3. The language in education policy in Uganda has a differential effect on literacy practices among rural and urban learners.
4. Socio-cultural conditions influence learners' literacy practices and hence have differential effects on the academic performance of the rural and urban learners.
5. Exposure to the language of the academic discourse has an effect on academic achievement.
6. The culture in the home influences learning both at home and in school. This study takes the word culture to depict all the knowledge and values, the attitudes and behaviour that are characteristic of a particular social group or organisation that are shared by that particular group or society.
7. The local literacies need to be modified so that they take into account the global literacies for the learners to fit in the global world.

### **1.13: Delimitations**

This study delimits itself to the establishment of the literacy practices present in rural and urban areas in the Iganga district in Uganda and their impact on learners' academic achievements. It also analyses the impact of the language in education policy on the acculturation of supportive literacy practices among primary school learners, and explores the impact of socio-cultural factors e.g. the level of parents' education, on the learners' academic performance.

### **1.14: Definition of terms**

I have endeavoured to give an in-text definition of terms whenever I have deemed it necessary. Here, I give a few of the salient definitions.

Following Street (2001: 10), a **literacy event** is a particular situation where things are happening and where you can see them happening – an event that involves reading and/or writing e.g. an academic literacy event.

**Literacy practices** are the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing in cultural contexts. In essence, in this study, the phrase 'literacy practices' also covers literacy events (cf. Banda, 2003; Street, 2001; Baynham, 2000; Baynham & Massing, 2000).

**Imbalance** – 'unequalness', inequality; almost polarized performance differences with good and/or excellent performance on the one side and poor or non-performance on the other side.

**Culture** – is taken to encompass all the knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviour that are characteristic of a particular social group and that are shared by that particular group or society.

**Acculturation** – is the process of instilling useful practices in children.

**Tadooba** – is a form of candle which is made using a small tin, such as one that once contained insecticide. The tin is partially cut open at the top and a much smaller tin with a hole in the middle, which acts as a cover is

fitted to cover the opening. A string or strip of an old cloth is then inserted through the hole to reach the bottom of the bigger tin, in which paraffin is put. The string comes out from the top and when it is lit it provides a yellow flame, which can dimly light the area.

**Rural schools** – these are essentially the schools whose learners perform poorly in examinations. Most of them are found in the rural areas, but in this study they include even those schools which may be located in urban areas, but where the performance is just as poor as, or worse than that of the rural schools.

**Urban schools** – these are essentially the schools where the learners perform well in examinations. Most of them are located within a radius of less than three kilometres around the urban areas, but they include a few other schools which are further than that, but within reach of basic amenities such as safe water and electricity.



### **1.15: Chapter outline**

This study will be presented in nine chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction.

The main aim of this chapter is to introduce the current study. It gives the background of the study by analysing the rural-urban educational scenario in Uganda. It also contains the statement of the problem, the purpose, objectives, scope and significance of the study, as well as the research questions, delimitations and the definition of some of the terms used in the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter presents a review of literature related to rural-urban academic achievement imbalances, the importance of, and attitudes towards the medium of instruction, the parents' role in their children's education and the significance of effective teachers' methodology in the learning process. The literature reviewed in this chapter includes books, journals, magazines, newspapers and Internet articles.

### Chapter 3: Theoretical and conceptual framework

This chapter analyses the NLS's views, especially the views that literacy is a social practice and that educators should draw upon the local literacies to help learners succeed in school. It scrutinises the autonomous versus ideological model debate and looks at the hybrid model as the better option in the development of literacy practices. In addition, this chapter analyses CDA and how it relates to this study especially by informing us of the hegemonic influences that the use of different languages in education can have on society and how CDA can be used to decipher people's attitudes and ideologies in order to understand the choices they make.

### Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used in the study. It describes the classroom observations, the one-to-one interviews with the head teachers, teachers and the teacher trainers, the focus group discussions with the parents and the learners, the school and home visits and the document analysis. It

also gives a description of the population samples, the instruments and the procedure used to carry out the research.

Chapter 5: Findings and discussion of the academic climate, the language question, attitudinal and ideological issues.

This chapter presents and discusses the findings about the academic climate as shown by the PLE results, end of term test scores and the learners' work. It also discusses the language question in the face of globalisation, and the ideologies held by the different stakeholders in the process of education.

Chapter 6: Findings and discussion of literacy practices in rural homes and schools



This chapter presents and discusses the findings about the literacy practices found in the rural homes such as those related to domestic chores and running errands. It also discusses the literacy practices found in rural schools such as reading and doing exercises in class and interacting with the teachers. It describes the roles played by the homes and the schools in acculturation, scaffolding and mediation in the development of supportive literacy practices and how these processes impact on the learners' academic achievements.

Chapter 7: Findings and discussion of literacy practices in urban homes and schools

This chapter presents and discusses the findings about the literacy practices found in the urban homes such as reading with and doing

homework with parents, watching TV and listening to radio programmes and discussing what they see and hear with parents. This chapter also discusses the findings about the literacy practices found in the urban schools such as doing an abundance of exercises, discussing subject content with their teachers and reading extensively. It describes the roles played by the homes and the schools in acculturation, scaffolding and mediation in the development of supportive literacy practices and how these processes impact on the learners' academic achievements.

#### Chapter 8: Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusions I have drawn based on my findings. The general conclusion drawn is that most of the urban parents have some  resources and this enables them to put supportive literacy practices in place for their children even before they are able to read and write and that this helps the urban children to build on that foundation when they go to school. Thus they excel in their academic tasks. It also concludes that most of the rural parents have no sources of income and thus, they cannot help the schools to put infrastructure that can facilitate maximum learning in place and that without supportive literacy practices both at home and in school, and living and learning in impoverished conditions, the rural learners struggle to learn. All these factors impact negatively on their academic achievements.

#### Chapter 9: Recommendations and further research

In this chapter I endeavour to give some recommendations for the head teachers, teachers, parents, teacher trainers, and learners. The

recommendations articulated are based on the fact that the conditions in the home greatly influence what happens in the schools. It is recommended that the parents need to be involved in their children's learning process. In this chapter I also suggest some areas for future research in this field.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1: Introduction**

This study was prompted by the observation that there is a salient imbalance in academic performance between the rural and urban learners in Uganda. As elaborated in Chapter One, this imbalance is clearly noticed right from primary school. This imbalance raises concern because it has far-reaching implications. These implications continue to be reflected in the lives of the whole population especially in the employment sector of the country. This literature review explores the differences in achievements/performance in educational tasks where rural and urban learners are concerned. This section reviews literature related to the impact of the learners' exposure to literacy practices (LPs) at home and at school, exposure to the academic discourse both at home and at school, teacher and parent attitudes, teacher methodology and the influence of all these factors on learners' educational/academic performance. The literature reviewed in this chapter also reveals that learners need parental support, the teachers' expertise and the presence of a great amount of materials, and that these enhance the learning process.

#### **2.2 Learners' achievements**

Learners' academic achievement is the fundamental focus of any educational institution. Academic achievement is, therefore, the ultimate concern for the school as an institution of learning, the head teacher, the teachers, the parents, the learners and the community at large. Good grades bring satisfaction, excitement and cultivate confidence within the learners and among all stakeholders. All the respondents in this study frequently made this observation. But good grades have to be worked for and

this calls for all stakeholders to play their various roles in order to achieve them. Appelbaum advises that the success of the learners demands that all the participants (stakeholders) respect each other and work together for the academic development of all members of the classroom (Appelbaum, 2002: 41). The issue at stake here is that all the people involved should know what it takes to get the desirable good grades and then work diligently together, because when the (good grades) are not forthcoming, disappointment and frustration ensue for all parties involved, and this raises concern. This concern amounts to what Barton (1999: 1) has referred to as a crisis in education. In such a case there is a tendency to apportion blame, which might edge towards witch-hunting especially for the teachers, some of whom might end up losing their jobs. (For performance of the schools in this study see tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3).

In the education process learners' achievements are primarily assessed through the skills of reading and writing, as these skills have to come into play during the course of learning and in the writing of examinations. (It should be noted that all examinations in primary and secondary schools in Uganda are written examinations.) This makes the development of those skills imperative, since learners' achievements are to be assessed through them. This is the rationale for Barton's observation that:

In public debate everywhere there is perceived to be a crisis in education, and the topic of reading and writing is at the centre of the discussion. It is a contentious issue in schools, community and in public debate (Barton, 1999: 1).

This whole issue is contentious because reading and writing constitute and are inherent in the literacy practices that support and foster the learning process. This study takes literacy practices to be the critical ingredient in the learning process. I

take this position in agreement with a vast body of research (Machet, 2001; Street, 2000, 2001, 2003; Barton, 1999; Banda, 2003; McGroarty, 1996) and the findings of this study indicate that in the course of education the literacy practices to which learners are exposed go a long way in enhancing or inhibiting their academic achievements. But as already indicated elsewhere, in Uganda reading and writing in English is particularly critical since the national examinations are in English. To perform well in those examinations learners must have a sufficient level of fluency in English. To attain a reasonable and/or required level of fluency the children need exposure to the language of the academic discourse.

This is illustrated by Machet who, while analysing the problems of literacy in the disadvantaged communities of South Africa, established that the children from these communities could not learn to read effectively because they did not have sufficient access to libraries in general and to books in particular. This was so because for a long time libraries had been a preserve of the predominantly white areas and most of the black parents could not buy books for several reasons. Among these were the lack of disposable income and the fact that many black people regarded reading as being related only to education. This meant that the black parents could not put in place facilities and activities that could initiate and develop literacy practices among their children before the children went to school as the white parents were doing. According to Machet, this affected the academic performance of the black children. Machet points out that if one wishes children to learn to read fluently and to understand the role literacy plays in their lives, the materials with which they will learn these skills must be available (Machet 2001: 6). This is demonstrated in Chapters Five, Six and Seven of this study.

### **2.3: Literacy practices**

The concept of literacy practices stems from the bigger concept of literacy. For a long time literacy was conventionally defined as the ability to read and write (Wasik, Dobbins & Herrmann, 2001: 444). Many scholars have long since revisited this view and found that the concept of literacy is indeed elusive. Among them are Herbert and Richardson (2001: 121) who point out that many definitions of literacy have been suggested but there is no scholarly consensus as to the exact or single clear-cut definition of the word. While Bhola (1994: 26) clearly articulates the same view by saying that literacy is difficult to define, he also explains that its (literacy's) meanings tend to slip away. Heath (1980: 123) has it that the concept of literacy covers "a multiplicity of meanings, and definitions of literacy carry implicit but generally unrecognised views of its function...". This implies what literacy can do for individuals or specific communities. Kerka (1991) suggests that the meaning, uses, and value of literacy are not the same for all members of society. Many other scholars including Gee, (1991) and Besneir and Street, (1994: 11) give other definitions. But, Street posits that:



...literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. It is also always embedded in social practices, such as those of a particular job market or a particular educational context and the effects of learning that particular literacy will depend on those particular contexts (Street, 2003: 2, and 2001: 7).

Along the same line, after an extensive analysis of the various types and levels of literacy and the divergent literacies inherent in different social contexts, McKay (1996) posits that literacy is a reflection of community values and traditions about how to approach texts. McKay explains that an individual's ability to attain various specific levels of a particular literacy is not just a matter of acquiring specific skills

levels; rather that acquisition should provide one with social identity. That identity enables one to be recognised within certain social parameters because that individual can now use the acquired skill to a profitable advantage. An example of this is that the attainment of what McKay calls technical literacy should define one as a specialist in a particular field of study. In support of that Fingeret (1991) asserts that the construction of the meaning of literacy is rooted in experience, culture, and language and that these are at the heart of literacy. The experience and culture Fingeret emphasises would define the identity in McKay's perspective.

It is in the acknowledgement of these divergent views that I point out in Chapter One and elaborately discuss in Chapter Three how the word literacy is fluid in the sense that it means different things to different people and in different contexts, therefore, different people define literacy differently. In Chapter One I enunciate that literacy, to this study, includes the ability to read, write, express oneself, listen for information, seek and gain knowledge and to use that knowledge and the available resources to solve problems or address the situations one might encounter in life or in a particular social context. Thus, being 'literate' in the context of this study means being able to read, write, express oneself, listen for information, seek and gain knowledge and to use that knowledge and the available resources to solve problems or address the situations one might encounter in life or in a particular social context. This premise emanates from the fact that literacy permeates the people's political, social, cultural and economic aspects of life, since it is embedded in the activities of people's ordinary lives whether or not they regularly read books or do much writing (Barton, 1999: 4).

In fact, New (2001: 249), McKay (1996) and Neuman & Roskos (1998) observe that literacy begins at birth, is ongoing, and is influenced and interpreted by the surrounding socio-cultural context. It is based on these positions that NLS asserts that literacy is a social practice, since it is always embedded in people's lives and is

discernible in many of the activities in which they engage. NLS, thus, advocates for the identification and use of local literacies to help learners to progress in school. But it is the contention of this study that with globalisation and the onset of the information age, dependence on local literacies is not nearly enough. To be meaningful, local literacies need to be enriched by incorporating into themselves aspects of, or developments in the more powerful global literacies. On their own, the local literacies may end up being a hindrance to educational success, socio-economic mobility and to access to echelons of power. I will return to this argument later in the discussion section.

Literacy manifests itself through literacy practices (LPs). LPs encompass literacy events in which people participate in particular situations in which activities of reading and/or writing take place, and in which the patterns of the activities around literacy are linked to the broader cultural and social context (Street, 2001: 10-11). The literacy activities in these specific contexts do not have to be academic at the beginning, but may become so as time passes and/or the children grow. Barton has ably illustrated this:

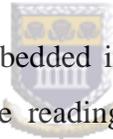
Early on, children do not necessary want to write stories, but writing comes into games, making tickets for a show, inventing an application form to join a club, adding words to pictures. Once again, early writing provides an example of children learning through social interaction, and later internalising their knowledge. In addition, the activity which the writing is part of is more important than the writing itself...for one child these purposes were putting his name on his door to demonstrate ownership ... (Barton, 1999: 157).

Barton goes on to explain that for a child to put his name on the door to demonstrate ownership is a way to demarcate his social territory. It makes sense in the social

context where the child lives (Barton, 1999: 157). But this can only happen and be meaningful in a social context where writing and reading are part of the literacy practices in that context and where the people in that community understand and acknowledge such ownership.

It is in this light that while Goodman (1980: 31) remarks that literacy develops naturally in all children in a literate society, she also explains that:

It is impossible to consider literacy development without understanding the significance of the culture both in a larger society in which a particular culture grows and develops and within the specific culture in which the child is nourished (Goodman 1980: 4).



This demonstrates how literacy is embedded in our lives right from the very early stages in life. In a community where reading and writing are part of the social practices the children may start with doodling and scribbling but eventually learn how to read and write. As the children grow, their academic achievements have everything to do with a lot of reading and writing both in school and at home, as is the case with the urban children in the Iganga district and indeed almost everywhere in urban areas. And what happens at school ends up supporting and complementing what has been happening at home, thus building a culture in which those children are nourished.

However, in a community where reading and writing are not directly and overtly part of the social practices, or are used quite frequently, the children will have to wait until they get to school before they embrace any reading and writing practices, as is the case for the rural children in this study. These will also belatedly develop the culture but will take long (if they ever do) to come to the same linguistic level with those who were exposed to those skills at an earlier age. It is on the basis of this that the

current study takes LPs in which the learners engage in both settings to be pivotal in the whole education process.

Street (2001) defines literacy practices as the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing in cultural contexts (see also, Banda, 2003; Baynham, 2000; Baynham & Massing, 2000). In view of this, the current study takes the phrase 'literacy practices' also to cover literacy events as in Heath's view. Heath characterises a literacy event as any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interaction and their interpretive process (Heath, 1982: 50). Elaborating on Heath's view Street, (2000: 21) goes on to elucidate that the 'literacy event' is a helpful concept because it helps us to focus on a particular situation where things are happening and you can see them happening. Street's work in Iran illustrates his exposition (see Chapter Three). These literacy events are embedded in our mental life; they form and are formed by our awareness, intentions and actions (Barton, 1999: 35). What we see happening turns out to be the literacy practices that reflect the general cultural ways in which the participants utilise literacy (Barton, 1999: 37). Scholars give examples of literacy events in a community that include, inter alia, reading and/or discussing the contents of a newspaper with a friend, taking a telephone message (Barton 1999: 36), a mother discussing and constructing a shopping list with a daughter, scrutinising utility bills before paying them and writing letters to relatives (Kenner, 2000: 15). What should be noted is that all these events and practices take place and derive meaning and value from the specific contexts in which they occur. It is also important to note, as this study demonstrates, that these events contribute to the initiation of the acculturation process the children later draw upon as they acquire and use the schooled literacy practices in their education process.

### **2.3.1: The importance of Literacy Practices**

Literacy practices (LPs) make up the everyday and schooled literacies found in our home and school communities. Thus, they are of utmost importance in the learning process. Banda (2003) argues that finding ways of taking advantage of everyday literacies can bring about improvement in performance in schooled literacy. He elaborates by saying that the kind of literacy practices learners bring to the educational settings could be of great value in gaining access to the educational discourse. He expounds that this would entail the educators, teachers and policy-makers becoming aware of the value of the local literacies so that they can use them while helping the children in the acquisition of the schooled literacies. Thus, he proposes the pedagogy of multiliteracies for African learners. The pedagogy of multiliteracies or multiple literacies, involves identifying and analysing and then making use of the various forms of literacies which exist in a particular society to facilitate education at school (Banda, 2003: 126). This needs to be done because it has been observed that differences between home socialisation and school expectations can often contribute to failure at school. Studies in NLS support this view (see also Saxena, 1994; Martin-Jones & Bhatt, 1998; Kenner, 2000; Street, 2001; Kerka, 1991; Bloome, 1994: 102; Edwards, 1987: 14; Mansy and Ghahremani-Ghajar, 1999: 73; Senosi, 2004 and Street, 1994: 11).

Two issues arise here. First, there could be failure, on the part of the educators and/or teachers, to identify the useful literacy practices in the community and even failure to see how best those they may identify can be used in the learning environment. To be able to do this would entail both research and resourcefulness. Second, there could be a possibility that the literacy practices in some communities are more school oriented and can be very supportive to the learning process compared to those found in other communities. This can be illustrated using the examples Banda gives from his study: the cases of someone reading a written text on radio or TV or SMS messaging. These can be very useful as Banda ably explains. The read text would enrich the listeners' vocabulary and structures of language and the SMS would develop the note-making and summary skills. All these are very useful in the education process. But while they may be common in urban areas they are definitely not very common in most rural

areas for one major reason that the rural population lacks the resources and the economic means, which facilitate the acquisition of such gadgets as TVs and cellphones. What is being articulated here then is that there could be a situation where there is a general lack of supportive literacy practices. In such a case then, the mismatch or the differences between home socialisation and school expectations brings complications to the learning process. As this study later demonstrates, these matters have different implications for the learners in the different situations. Nonetheless, what remains crucial is identifying what literacy practices exist and using them effectively for the required purpose.

Barton (1999: 157) takes this argument further by singling out writing and saying that early writing provides an example of children learning through social interaction, and later internalising their knowledge. He points out that when children acquire literacy practices they develop emergent theories about what language is, about what literacy is, and about how to learn (Barton, 1999: 183). To him and to this study, this is important especially if the acquired knowledge is taken up at school and put to use during the learning process. Along the same line of thought, Street (1994) observes that in recent years there has developed greater sensitivity to the local kinds of knowledge and understanding and some programme developers have begun to build on what people already have rather than assuming they start as empty vessels (Street 1994: 10). Later he brings it down to the educational context and emphasises that:

Good educational practice today requires facilitators to build on what the learners bring to the class... (Street, 2001: 14).

Baker (1994) further clarifies the same point:

...what the child brings in the classroom in terms of previous learning is a crucial starting point for the teacher. A child's reservoir of

knowledge, understanding and experience can provide a meaningful context from which the teacher can build.... Getting a child to talk about something familiar will be cognitively less demanding than talking about something culturally or academically unfamiliar (Baker, 1994: 142).

In agreement with the above scholars, Machet (2001) underscores the importance of the learner's family participation in the development of the children's literacy practices when she states that the family (literacy) practices actively channel the children's literacy development through the creation of sets of experiences and opportunities. She observes that if family members arrange activities such as reading to the child or avail the reading materials in which the child's interests and needs are the central focus, then socialisation with these materials will occur directly or indirectly. And she also stresses that if the child observes or participates as the family members are reading and writing everyday, by the time such a child goes to school, s/he will have the knowledge of how books work, unlike one who has not had such a chance to associate with the world of books prior to going to school (Machet, 2001: 3). Talking about the family activities that involve literacy practice Fishman (1990) and Corson (1993) support Machet. Corson expounds that:

...all these activities have usurped the traditional role of the family as the major partners with the school; they are also intense arenas for language use, for communication of language attitudes and promotion of language competency (Corson 1993: 188).

The importance of language competency in learning mentioned here cannot be over-emphasised, since it is the medium through which information and knowledge of subject content is gained and put forward when the learners are writing examinations

([NCCRD] 2000). That we need language to develop literacy practices is not a negotiable fact.

Furthermore, the kind of observation and eventual participation in the literacy practices found in the children's homes and/or community helps in the development of their awareness, attitudes and values with respect to literacy. These attitudes and values later guide their actions, particularly in their education (Barton, 1999: 35). Along the same line Heath (1994) accentuates the importance of the LPs in the children's homes:

As the school-oriented parents and their children interact in the pre-school years, adults give their children, through modelling and specific instructions ways of taking from books, which seem natural in school and in numerous institutional settings ... These mainstream ways exist in societies around the world that rely on formal educational systems to prepare children for participation in settings involving literacy. In some communities these ways of schools and institutions are very similar to the ways learned at home (Heath 1994: 73).

The interaction between children and their parents with regard to literacy practices may begin by observation as the children watch the parents work with books. The parents move on to provide the children with paper and pencil and instructions and eventually to mediation in the learning process once the children start school (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven for the detailed discussion of the mediation process). I agree with Heath's research and support the disposition put forward. I hasten to add that the acquired literacy practices foster the process of the acculturation of the child into the world of books and sets off the motivation for learning in that child. These two, the acculturation and the exposure, later prove valuable assets when the child goes to school. Due to this kind of observation studies have suggested that becoming

literate among children might be a continuous developmental process that begins early in life (Hall, 1994: 17). Fishman (1989) observes that

...the learner who arrives at school from a community environment in which literacy is 'in the air' (widely spread, intensively cultivated and highly respected and rewarded pursuit) arrives ready not only for L1 literacy but even for L2 literacy. However, the child who arrives without prior foundation in literacy (and this is particularly likely to be the child from a culturally disadvantaged background) must first develop literacy-related socio-cognitive skills and dispositions (Fishman 1989: 467).

The significance of this observation to the current study is that the development of schooled literacies has its roots in the home literacies, where these exist. But the major concern of this study lies with the other children: the children who have no experience with the school-related literacies in their homes. How are they going to cope, especially if, at the end of it all, they are expected to compete with those who arrive ready, not only for L1 literacy, but even for L2 literacy? Whitehurst and Lonigan sum this situation up as follows:

...and there is strong continuity between the skills with which children enter school and their later academic performance. Those children who experience early difficulties in learning to read are unlikely to catch up with their peers (Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001: 11).

In the final analysis, the disadvantaged category will end up with early difficulties not only in learning to read but in the whole education process, at least for a number of years, if they are to catch up at all. This gives credence to the fact that the literacy practices in the children's lives, in their homes and communities are important. They

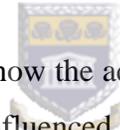
are bound to affect those children's lives throughout their life time. Whitehurst and Lonigan's observation is pertinent because, as the results of this study demonstrate, it tends to explain the low achievements of the rural children in the Iganga district, since they encounter reading much later in life when they enter school between the ages of seven or eight to ten years old, making it difficult for them to catch up with those who encounter it earlier in their lives. In addition, the lack of sufficient reading materials evident in the rural schools increases their perils.

#### **2.4: Exposure to language and academic development**

Substantial arguments have been advanced for the kind of imbalances that exist between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements. Research has shown that rural learners have difficulties in coping with academic discourse, in part, for reliance on primary discourses (which are in effect oral, based on the mother tongue) (Gough and Bock, 2001). But several other studies argue that if learners can grasp concepts better in their primary discourses then it will be easy for those learners to transfer those concepts into English or any other L2 which turns out to be the language of the academic discourse (Desai, 1999; Williams, 1996; Jones and Tetroe, 1987; Kelly, 1986; Arndt, 1987). Thus, Benson (2002) puts it that in contrast to a second or foreign language, the L1 is the most efficient language for beginning literacy and content area instruction. She bases her argument on Cummins idea of the cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) hypothesis, which suggests that a child's second language competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the first language. Baker informs us that according to Cummins (1978) the more developed the L1 is, the easier it will be for the child to develop L2 (Baker 1994: 138). In the learning environment then, this would mean that those learners with a well-developed L1 and who use it in education would be bound to perform very well during the period when they are using the L1 as the medium of instruction (MOI) and even when they taken on learning in L2.

In support for this view Bamgbose (2000) expounds the whole concept by describing a project started in 1970 and carried out in Nigeria in which two sets of primary school learners were compared. One set was taught in the Yoruba medium for the entire primary education and the other set was taught in the same medium for three years only and the other three years they were taught in English and he explains that the experiment started in one school but in 1973 it was extended to ten other schools, with additional variables built into the treatment groups. He reports that:

After a thorough evaluation, it has been shown that the experiment resulted in superior performance by those taught throughout the six years of primary education in their first language (except for having English as a subject) as compared with those taught initially in their first language and later in English (Bamgbose, 2000: 52, 1984).



It would, however, be interesting to know the additional variables that were built into the treatment groups and how they influenced the reported results. It would also be interesting to know what the results would have been without those added variables. In addition, the description of this project also leaves out one important issue: the issue about the language of examination. Did the two groups do their examinations in the same language? If so, what language was it? If the language of examination was the mother tongue, then it would not be surprising that the group with six years of experience in that language did better than those who had fewer years. As far as the CALP hypothesis holds, the group that had more years would be better equipped for the examinations. But it should also be noted that the CALP is premised on extensive teaching and development in the L1. But in many parts of Africa and particularly in Uganda the mother tongues are poorly taught, if they are taught at all. In the Iganga district the district education officer was not aware of a single school in the district that taught Lusoga as a subject, even though it was extensively used as MOI in these rural schools. Banda (2000) argues that teaching through mother tongue is often

problematic, since in most cases it is assumed that whoever can speak it can teach it and can use it as medium of instruction to teach learners effectively, which is clearly a misconception.

Banda's observation is very useful and pertinent and it guided this study because it seems to have formed the basis of the Ugandan government's reasoning for coming up with a language policy that dictates that the rural learners should be taught using their mother tongue from P 1 to P 4. This is done, and in reality, in most cases in the rural schools, it continues right up to P 6 or even P 7, when the learners are being prepared for their Primary Leaving Examinations, (PLE). This means that the rural learners are taught, and are always interacting in their mother tongue, both at home and in school. This, in Cummins' view, would imply that the rural learners acquire substantial mastery of their L1s and could therefore easily transfer concepts and subject content to the L2, and hence would be expected to excel in examinations.



But for various reasons, some of which are the subject of this study, despite Cummins' expositions, the performance of the rural learners taught in the mother tongue, in the Iganga district in particular and Uganda in general, is poorer than those learners who learn through ESL. The question that comes to mind in the case of the Iganga district and almost all the other rural districts is: why then, does not the knowledge of their mother tongue, which must be very advanced by the time the rural learners get to P 7, help in transferring the concepts the rural learners are taught? This brings into focus Kyeyune's argument to the effect that there are well-known practical difficulties with education through mother tongue which can inhibit automatic success (Kyeyune, 2003: 173). Kyeyune argues that if learners' achievements are low while English is used as the MOI, it does not automatically follow that the use of mother tongue will improve their performance. She demonstrates, through her research, that the causes of poor performance may be found elsewhere, rather than in the MOI per se.

Therefore, it should be understood that much as it might be part of the cause, using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction is laudable and may be even desirable as reflected by a vast research body (Desai, 1994, 1999), but it is not the only problem here.

Other matters must be looked at. And one other such issue worthy of attention here then is: could the problem be that the mother tongue instruction used in rural areas is usually oral-based for lack of written materials? To this effect Bamgbose (2000: 54) enunciates that materials for teaching African languages are not as up-to-date and readily available as those for teaching English. Commenting on the South African situation Banda (2000) points out that:

... it would make little sense to strictly enforce mother tongue education in South Africa given the prevailing situation where there is little or no educational materials in African languages ... (Banda, 2000: 62).

These observations do not only apply to Nigeria and South Africa. This is also true in the Ugandan case because, for a long time, as the country went through turbulent years of political turmoil during the 1970s and the 1980s there was hardly any literature published in the mother tongue in Uganda. The turbulent years are long gone but to date, there are hardly any mother tongue materials in schools. The few textbooks, for both teachers and learners', supplied by government in the rural areas, where mother tongue is supposed to be, and is in fact, the medium of instruction, are in English (see Chapters Five and Six).

Kigongo-Bukenya (2003) attests to this when he acknowledges that due to the linguistic multiplicity of the Ugandan population it is quite difficult for the publishing industry to produce materials that can satisfy the linguistically divergent population. Ikoja-Odongo (2003) articulates this clearly:

In all, 56 languages are recognised constitutionally (Uganda Constitution, 1995) and spoken in Uganda. None of them is either an official or a national language. Publishing of information in these languages is very insignificant and in some languages there is no literature at all. The official language is English while Kiswahili is the national language. None of these is indigenous. Yet information materials in public libraries are in English.... The basic infrastructure for information flow is generally inadequate. Due to a multiplicity of languages leading to fragmentation of information market, nascent publishing industry, unreliable information distribution network, a majority of Ugandans do not get information materials easily (Ikoja-Odongo, 2003).



That is as true about general information as it is about textbooks and other reading materials required in schools. This lack of materials written in local languages is not only because of the multiplicity of the languages. Kwesiga (1994: 63) further explains that publishers often refuse to publish materials written in local languages because they claim they have no market. The lack of market can be traced to be partly a consequence of the poverty in the rural areas where such materials would be put to use and partly the lack of will on the part of the government to support the publishers in this regard. One cannot help thinking that, since the government sees to it that textbooks are published in English, it would be possible to have some published in some L1s, if the government had the will. But as demonstrated in the quotation from government elsewhere, the government appears to favour the use of English over

African languages as the language of education. The importance of teaching materials for the development literacies in learners is underpinned in Machet's argument that:

It is axiomatic that if you wish children to learn to read fluently and understand the role that literacy can play in their lives, the materials with which they will learn these skills must be available. Children cannot learn to read effectively if there are no books for them to read (Machet, 2001: 6).

As will be shown by this study, due to the lack of reading materials in the mother tongue, most of the classroom practices for the rural learners in Uganda turn out to be oral-based. Furthermore, this lack of material can also be seen as a factor that reduces the learners' motivation to read in, and learn the mother tongue to such levels as would foster the development of the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), which learners need to develop in order to deal with the content of their education effectively (Baker 1997: 151). This presents a dilemma. And, as I later demonstrate, this translates to the fact that the lack of teaching material in the mother tongue and the poor learning conditions lead to poor results. This, in turn works against local languages, as they are associated with mediocrity and backwardness, since the rural learners who use them in learning never perform as well as those who use English. Thus, not only the local languages themselves, but also those who learn through are marginalised and stigmatised (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

On the other hand, however, the urban learners, are taught in English from pre-primary and/or P 1, and therefore have more 'experience' with English, – the language of academic discourse. The urban learners have vast access to a lot of written materials because they have always been available to them. (See Chapters Five and Seven). These are insightful observations because as Machet (2001) points out, they imply that the rural learners cannot develop the supportive LPs that accrue

from reading, such as inference, critical analysis of written information, written comprehension skills and reading speed, which are very helpful in the learning process. Baker (1994) agrees with Machet and underscores the importance of the presence of materials while arguing the case for minority languages. He postulates that the absence of the endangered language from the mass media (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, tapes and computer software) at the very least affects the prestige of the language. These resources are also lacking in rural areas.

The importance of exposure to the language of the academic discourse should not be underestimated. As McGroarty (1996) states:

Learners of English as a second language are in a rather different situation: their level of comprehension of the standard or any other dialect is influenced by the amount of exposure to the language (McGroarty, 1996: 19).



Gee (1990) articulates the same point this way:

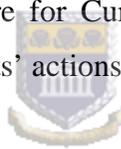
A problem arises because the learners who have acquired a discourse like the school or academic discourse will be able to learn through the medium of the school discourse more easily than those who have not done so (Gee, 1990).

While Crookes and Schmidt (1991) observe, and I agree with them, that:

...the responses of students studying a foreign language who have very limited access to the language outside their classes may be very different from the responses of the students studying a language

widely available in their environment outside the classroom (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991).

Research, as exemplified by these scholars, acknowledges that limited exposure to the academic discourse puts the learners at a disadvantage. And as will be demonstrated in due course, one of the major reasons why middle class urban parents have increasingly taken to speaking to their children in English and making sure that their children have access to its 'standard' forms as spoken on TVs and radios, as well as availing them of books and other material in English, is to give them a head start in the language of the educational discourse to enable them perform well in their academic tasks. This is not happening in Uganda only. Banda (1995: 111) reports that in urban Zambia, it is becoming an unmarked choice for a father or even grandparents to use English in the home environment in communicating with children and other family members. The National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development ([NCCRD] 2000) justifies these parents' actions when they argue that:

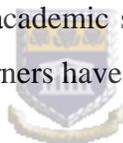


...language and discourse are constitutive of thought. In other words thought is conveyed by language and through language, via systems of symbols. This implies that learners' language proficiency and repertoire of discourse will have a strong effect on their academic success (NCCRD, 2000: 9).

The urban parents, then, want to ensure that they help their children to develop that strong language proficiency and repertoire of academic discourse, which will have a strong effect on and ascertain their academic success. This means that the children of 'well-off' urban parents are a level above those of the poor rural parents. Thus, when the urban learners come face to face with the same language during examinations, certainly, their responses, as suggested by Crookes and Schmidt above, have to be very different from those of the rural learners, who will have had very limited access

to the same language. Consequently, this means that the rural learners' lack of proficiency reflects a strong negative effect on their academic success. What is being articulated here is the thesis that the exposure to the language of the academic discourse, be it mother tongue or English, that the urban learners have, fosters their performance in school, while the lack of the same exposure greatly impacts negatively on the performance of the rural learners.

The exposure being advocated for takes both the oral form, as seen above, and the written form. Both forms are important. Mchet (2001) stresses the written form too when she advises that there is a need to get the children to participate in organized sets of practices involving written materials, because this gives them a solid foundation for subsequent academic growth. Rothery and Martin (1980, 1981) and Kelly (1989) also accentuate that lack of experience in writing leads to lack of success in writing texts required for academic success, such as the texts required in the written examinations Ugandan learners have to take.



However, what is disheartening is that while these observations are very important to the current study, Tomasevski (1999) points out that the textbooks in Uganda are prohibitively expensive and yet the development of the written literacy practices is concomitant to the availability of written documents. Kelly (1989) agrees with Mchet who stresses that children benefit if they participate in organised sets of practices involving written materials in their homes. This author goes ahead to advise that the teachers should aim at fostering growth, through encouragement, dispelling fears and reducing anxieties about the writing process. Inherent in that advice is the dictum: practice makes perfect. But, one fact that has to be remembered here is that facilitating all this requires both resources and expertise. But, as this study demonstrates, while both expertise and resources seem to be accessible in the urban areas, they are greatly lacking in the rural areas. It follows then that it is only the relatively rich urban parents who can afford to buy the expensive textbooks and other

reading and writing materials. Yet, seeing the language in the written form would be of help to the linguistically impoverished rural learners to improve their writing skills and the acquisition of a wide variety of language structures, grammar and vocabulary, which would come in handy in their whole learning process. The lack of this exposure puts the rural learners at a great disadvantage.

It is noteworthy that, as already seen, according to the White Paper, even though the rural areas are supposed to use mother tongues (MTs) as the MOI in lower primary, there are almost no written materials published in any Ugandan local languages (Ikoja-Odongo, 2003). Besides, after P 4, MTs cease to be a language of education. MTs, then ‘can then be studied as a subject’ but they are not examinable. Maybe if they were examinable that would be reason enough for the teachers to pay them the attention they deserve. Nonetheless, from P 4 the rural learners are now supposed to be immersed into English, which for them is a secondary and de-contextualised discourse, for only three years before their PLE examinations. (And yet, as already mentioned, most of them do not receive the three years of full immersion as, in most cases, the teaching continues in the mother tongue up to P 7). PLE is set in English. What we need to remember here is what Gough and Bock (2001) articulate about a secondary discourse:

...it is a ‘specialist discourse that requires a degree of expert language and knowledge to produce and comprehend and is something that... is learned and refined rather than acquired (Gough and Bock, 2001).

What Gough and Bock are telling us here is that, the learners have to be taught the language and need ample time and considerable apprenticeship to learn and master it before they can use it effectively. They are saying that some skills are not just acquired. The question we face here is: are the three years enough for the rural

learners to master the secondary discourse well enough to express themselves in examinations? Another absurd fact is that the textbooks sent by government to the rural areas, which are in English are not sufficient for the big enrolments in the rural classes. And yet the parents cannot afford buying the books for their children. In effect, the rural learners have very little exposure, if any, to the written word and to the language of the academic discourse and this greatly impinges on the development of their academic skills. All these factors leave the rural children out in the cold, disadvantaged and as such destined for poor academic performance.

## **2.5: Attitudes**

The spread of English became worldwide during and after the colonisation era. As pointed out in the previous chapter, colonisation brought about the introduction and spread of formal education. Colonisers, working together with the missionaries, undertook the introduction of the English language. This was desirable at the time because the missionaries needed interpreters while the education sector needed teachers and assistants (Bangbose 2000: 48; Phillipson 2000: 91). To date, English has been growing steadily worldwide. Fairclough (2000) and Banda (2003: 125) assert that over time, English has increasingly become the language of the marketplace and globalisation as well as the language of the new world order. During this period it has also gained status and has come to be perceived and referred to as the language of power and a maker of identity (Phillipson 2000: 90; Edwards 1987: 9). It is not surprising that in Anglophone Africa, a person who speaks 'good' English is often held in high esteem, accorded high social status and is acknowledged as 'educated enough' to qualify for well-paying jobs (see Banda 1995, 1996).

Similarly, in Uganda, knowing English is perceived as a symbol of status that marks one's identity as an educated person. It should not surprise anyone then that the urban

population has taken up the language as its own, using it to speak to their children and ensuring that their children master the literacy practices in it. However, the growth and advancement of English as a language of power and status has given rise to mixed feelings and attitudes among different people. Bamgbose (2000) sums up the dilemmas thus:

Basically, three types of attitude can be discerned. First, an attitude of letting things be which translates into a continuation of colonial policies and practices. This means that African languages are either not used at all or that they are used in the early years of primary education. Second, an attitude that the nation needs to be modernised quickly (along Western lines, of course) and the best way of doing this is through an English- medium of education. This means that the use of African languages as a medium of instruction has to be discontinued... Third, there was a nationalistic attitude that favoured pride in a nation's cultural heritage and the need to make education an instrument of mass empowerment and participation. This translates into a departure from the use of the erstwhile colonial languages as a medium of instruction at all levels to the introduction of African languages as teaching media in the lower classes of primary school or an extension of an African language medium from these classes to the entire duration of primary education (Bamgbose 2000: 49-50).

I will begin my analysis of Bamgbose's categorisation with the third – the nationalistic view. The people in this category belong to a school of thought that sees it (the growth of English) as a continuation of imperialism taking off from where colonialism ended. Ngugi, one of the staunch advocates of this school of thought argues that:

...imperialism is not a slogan. It is real, it is palpable in content and form and in its methods and effects... imperialism is total: it has economic, political, military, cultural and psychological consequences for the people of the world today. It could cause a holocaust (Ngugi, 1986: 2).

The holocaust Ngugi writes about is a cultural one in which he envisages that all the languages and cultures of the non-English speakers will 'die' as they are swallowed up by the English language and culture. Obviously, those who hold this view have not embraced the fact that culture is not static and hence the African cultures could be enriched, as they take on some aspects inherent in the English language and culture. But, it is on the economic aspect where Ngugi would meet a huge challenge, as many people, especially those from the rural areas who feel that they cannot get well-paying jobs for their lack of the language of power, would vehemently disagree with him.



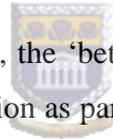
Another advocate of this position is Phillipson, who terms it 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson, 1988, 2000: 93). He argues that this is just another version of colonialism or global dominance where one group, the English speakers, are working very hard to force their control over the non-English speakers. Phillipson (1988), like Ngugi, argues that:

Linguistic imperialism is invariably associated with economic, military, political, cultural and related forms of imperialism. Dominance takes a variety of forms in different historical periods and contexts, and is legitimised in different ways. For instance, religion is in some cases a causal factor in linguistic spread... (Phillipson, 1988: 340)

He goes on to explain that:

In colonial times the dominant powers ascribed to themselves a missionary role (in which they taught English to interpreters and other people), which was based on explicitly racist premises (Phillipson, 1988: 340).

To an objective mind, this might be taking the argument a little bit too far as it may not be easy to see how teaching English and in English makes one a racist especially if it is exposed to all people equally as was the case in the colonies. What Phillipson forgets is that in fact, without the missionaries in Africa many African languages would not have a written script at all.



Furthermore, to this school of thought, the ‘better and higher view’ of the West and the white man that prompted colonisation as part of bringing ‘civilisation’ to the dark and primitive races is now less represented by the gun and the Bible than it is by technology and the textbook, since Western products still come wrapped in a Western language and Western thought (Phillipson, 1988: 341).

The proponents of this view continue and argue that the teaching of English to non-English speakers is an unfair linguistic oppression, which should be stopped so that learners can learn and master their own languages. Ngugi encapsulates it very vividly thus:

A new world order that is no more than global dominance of the neo-colonial relations policed by a handful of Western nations... is a disaster for the peoples of the world and their cultures... The languages of Europe were taught as if they were our own languages, as

if Africa had no languages except those brought there by imperialism, bearing the label MADE IN EUROPE (Ngugi 1993: xvi, 35).

Much of these arguments are built on the position that one's culture is embedded in one's language. Faced with that, there is often a tendency to believe that marginalisation of a language automatically kills the culture embedded in that language and the speakers of that language would lose their cultural identity (Robinson, 1994: 72; Ngugi, 1986: 16; Edwards, 1987: 9; Barton, 1994: 6). To the proponents of this school of thought, the growth and spread of English is fatal to other people's languages and culture, thus, it should be discouraged and stopped. The proponents of this view have masterminded most of the bilingual education crusades especially in America. They think that by teaching English and through English, the English speakers are trying to extend their spheres of influence and in so doing are stripping the non-English speakers of their identity and culture. They also argue that the English-speakers, in ignoring and/ or attacking other languages especially in America, are being racist and ethnocentric seeking just to spread their language and the hegemonic implications of that spread, as well as just being mindful of the countries' resources that would otherwise be spent on developing the other languages (Crawford, 2003: 3). The notion of racism in this context is based on the view that the speakers of English are racists because they portray an idealised image of themselves and of their language, and by so doing stigmatise and dominate the non-English speakers. Proponents of this view drive home their point by linking people's linguistic rights to human rights. They argue that people's linguistic rights should, like all other human rights, be protected and propagated (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990; Desai 1994: 20).

These are indeed salient observations and to some extent, they hold some truth, in as far as one group, the speakers of English appear to dominate the non-English speakers. But one fact that has to be at least acknowledged and appreciated, is that a

lot of precious information and knowledge has already been ‘packaged’ in English that is worth accessing (Bloome, 1994: 101). Most books and articles and Internet materials which the student, and indeed other people, need, are in English. The knowledge contained in the books and articles cover all sectors of life. Another valid argument would stem from the question: how do we stick to teaching purely in African languages when the socio-economic order is premised on English? Bearing these facts in mind I find a lot of sense in what Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) say when they point out that globalisation and Englishisation are discreetly penetrating a mass of economic, political, and cultural domains in complex ways, and recognise that, as well as being a means of wider or global communication, English has become a marker of identity. One would not be wrong to observe that it is, actually, the fact that English is a language of wider communication that enables Ngugi, Skutnabb-Kangas, Desai and others to employ it in disseminating their views. This, to some extent, implies that one chooses to ignore English at one’s own peril.



Literacy in English is often perceived as a gateway into the employment market and thus a passport to socio-economic status and mobility (Banda, 2003). Similarly, while remarking about schooled literacy, Parry (2000) had this to say about the Ugandan case:

It is a literacy that, despite the policies of initiating instructions in the mother tongue and of the teaching of Kiswahili, is stuck closely with English for through that language the mechanism of exams, it controls access to metropolitan social structure and hence modern international culture. In short, it plays a significant role in class formation and incidentally in siphoning of individuals from rural areas (Parry, 2000: 62).

What Parry is articulating here is that English has created an international culture inherent in the global communication which is evident in the metropolitan social structure. As said elsewhere, the fact that English is the language of examination in Uganda means that it controls the access to that metropolitan structure and thus plays a significant role in entrenching the rural-urban divide. This is so because people are leaving the rural areas for the urban areas in pursuit of English, which they use to better themselves in the employment market. That is, staying in the village with their mother tongue would condemn them to a miserable life of perpetual poverty, with no prospects for employment in the money economy. Consequently, even the few rural learners who manage to make a breakthrough by succeeding in passing their exams, which demand a mastery of English, end up leaving the rural areas as they seek and take employment in the urban areas. In essence L1 use does not appear to be rewarding enough to motivate serious public advocacy.



Furthermore, in line with that, Kwesiga points out that:

Because of the educational system Uganda has had, the ability to speak English is the envy of every Ugandan. It ushers one into the world of the educated and civilised (Kwesiga, 1994: 61).

What Parry and Kwesiga are highlighting is that the knowledge of English elevates one's social status while Mpoyiya and Prinsloo (1996: 192-193) clearly describe how it elevates one in the job market as they narrate Mtshengu's working experience in South Africa.

According to Bamgbose (2000) the second form of attitude is that the nation needs to be modernised quickly (along Western lines, of course) and the best way of doing this is through the English-medium of education. Part of this modernisation takes on the

form of creating an economy in which the population feels comfortable and productive. This involves participation in all sectors of life. In the post-colonial Uganda this, to some extent, becomes difficult without a good command of English. I am not saying that all jobs in Uganda require a good command of English. In fact, many people who do not know English move to urban areas in hope of finding some casual jobs if only they can make a living. But it is a fact that most of the well-paying jobs do require English. A good command of English becomes even more necessary if one is to move beyond the area of one's own linguistic group. Kiswahili, which is often referred to as another language that could take on the role of English, is not yet as widely spread in Uganda as it is in Kenya and Tanzania. Even though it has been around for a number of years, it is spoken by only a few scores of people. Kiswahili has suffered even more than the local languages because besides the lack of published materials (Kwesiga 1994: 59) it has suffered from lack of faith arising from the misuse it underwent during Idi Amin's rule in the 1970s. On the other hand, this should not be understood to mean that once one speaks English in Uganda, one automatically qualifies to find and indeed gets, a good job. But while that is not the case the lack of English in Uganda quite often sets limits for the type of jobs one can get and sometimes the location where you can get it. The lack of a good command of English also may set limits of the quality of job and the remuneration thereof, and hence, the socio-economic mobility.

This kind of scenario, together with the development, growth and spread of English worldwide (Fairclough, 2000; Banda, 2003) has also given rise to yet another perception of the English language. It has come to be perceived that the lack of it means that one will always belong to a certain category of people. This is a category of people who will never be able to access a certain standard of life because they are unable to compete for a certain class of jobs or to transact business beyond certain limits dictated by their linguistic ability notwithstanding the fact that one can participate in national development and in various economic activities using their first

languages. This, in effect, is to say that people with little or no basic education are, in a way, excluded from some of the social and occupational activities in their countries in general and Uganda in particular. This turns out to be paradoxical in the face of the current course of events where most governments are stressing not only the importance of education and its (education's) economic significance but also the need to fight illiteracy (Stercq, 1993: 18).

This premise has given rise to very strong sentiments. It has made some people, in Uganda, to aspire to learn English more than ever before. This has also been the basis of many adult literacy classes in many non-English speaking communities. It has also affected the attitudes of parents in most of the non-native English speaking communities and made them feel that their children should be given access to the language of power, global communication, and socio-economic mobility (Obanya, 1992).



Commenting on the parents' attitudes McGroarty points out that:

The attitude of parents reflects personal histories, including their responses to the wider cultural themes framing their own experiences. Thus, parents who believe that they may have been stigmatised because of their own language are particularly eager to have their children acquire the standard language; they may value their dialect in certain contexts but insist that their children have ample opportunity to develop skills in the prestige standard (McGroarty, 1996: 19).

This can be extended to imply that the parents, such as those in the rural areas in Uganda, who have failed to access certain jobs, and have been stigmatised because of their linguistic limitations are particularly eager to have their children acquire the

language they feel could ‘liberate’ their children. To them this would break the vicious circle of poverty they have hitherto lived in (Banda 2003). This can be particularly true if one remembers that the attitudes of students and parents are particularly shaped by the personal experiences of schooling and by the specific learning contexts. McGroarty also describes Goldsteins’ study in which it was established that learners opted for the prestige dialect if they sensed that using such a certain form would make them achieve their goals. The issue at stake becomes the achievement of one’s goals. If we could apply the scenario to the Ugandan context, then it would be easier to understand the rural parents’ outcry for the language they feel would empower their children. To them, this can yield the achievement of both the learners’ and the parents’ goals and change their status quo.

This is a salient attitude in Uganda, especially among the rural population who feel that chances are stuck against the rural people in particular, especially if their children do not acquire English. For them improvement in their social status is just a dream, a far-fetched dream. They and their families seem to be forever caught in a circle of poverty as the inaccessibility of English translates into them remaining closed out of the world economic order because they cannot access the socio-economic ladder. At the same time it continues to confer upon the urban elite both political and economic power and high social status (Kwesiga, 1994: 60). All these were enlightening views to this study, and I took them into consideration as I sought to establish the parents’ attitudes and ideologies towards the present academic situation in the Iganga district in Uganda (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

Education in the mother tongue is laudable and can be quite effective as Bamgbose (2000) above has demonstrated, but it also has its impediments. These include the lack of logistics and resources such as a lack of trained teachers and teaching/learning materials. Besides, the socio-economic set up of Uganda and indeed other states in Africa make it difficult to implement mother tongue education for all.

Turning to Bamgbose's first description of forms of attitude one encounters an attitude of letting things be. This form of attitude translates into a continuation of colonial policies and practices implying that African languages are either not used at all or that they are used in the early years of primary education. It is a fact that in many former British colonies including Uganda and Nigeria the mother tongue was used as the MOI in the early years of primary education and later English was taken on as MOI as was advocated for by UNESCO 1953 and many scholars.

However, Obanya informs us that in Nigeria questions have been raised about the psycho-pedagogical appropriateness of education in the mother tongue. He goes on to inform us that some people have even doubted whether starting education in the mother tongue would not jeopardize later learning in English (/French) at higher levels of education (Obanya, 1992: 2). The impact of the use and non-use of English in education should not be seen to be affecting African countries only. In India, it has been said that the recommendation that mother tongues (regional languages) be used as media of instruction up to tertiary education had the unintended effect of creating two streams of students, "those with the English medium having a definite advantage over the regional language medium students, both in employment and in postgraduate education" (Krishnamurti, 1990: 19). Elsewhere, in countries where 'multi-cultural' education and linguistic variation have been promoted, parents of ethnic minority children argue that their children are simply getting a 'second-class' education and are being denied the genres of power (Leungh & Tosi, 1999: Crawford, 2003: 1).

As will be demonstrated in this study, in Uganda likewise, English is strongly felt to be the 'genre of power'. The stakeholders, specifically the parents, especially those from rural areas, are bitter and they are wondering why their children cannot be given access to the language of the academic discourse and of power. They also feel that their children are simply being denied access to the language of power, be it inadvertently or otherwise.

As already stated above, in addition to not being examinable, in Uganda the mother tongue ceases to be the medium of instruction after P 4. Thereafter, all the academic literacy practices are linked to English. And, as observed by Bloome (1994: 103) it is through the literacy practices that learners gain the academic status, which is later, translated into job and career opportunities. Stercq attests to this when she spells out that when employers are giving aspirants jobs:

The people who are most favoured are those with the highest diplomas (or high qualifications as in the case in Uganda, *–my addition*). These people use their assets to make their way into the first jobs or are selected first. This pushes the weaker ones (less qualified) further and further in the waiting line, (Stercq, 1993: 20).

In as far as this matter is concerned it all falls back onto Malglaive's and Hasan's observations. Malglaive puts it thus:



While it is true that education does not create jobs, it is also true that an increase in qualification of the greatest number of people is now a condition for economic success and that to succeed in raising the qualifications of the mass income earners and the unemployed who are now poorly qualified in relation to the new job requirements is at once an issue, a challenge, and a responsibility for the people who are working in social and occupational integration and continuing education agencies (Malglaive, 1988).

Hasan emphasises the same fact in these words:

It may be true that educational capital is not automatically converted into economic gain: to succeed educationally may not necessarily mean moving to positions of power. But, there does remain the fact that without educational success the chances for the majority of us to attain any power over the course of our lives are almost non-existent (Hasan, 1996: 404).

The intrinsic argument here is about the association people make between 'being educated', 'being qualified' and English. To most people, the three are synonymous. In the eyes of the public and many employers when one is educated then one 'knows' English and so that person qualifies for the job especially if that person is competing with people who do not know much English and who are not highly educated as Stercq argues above.



Such notions have to affect people's attitudes. They have given rise to the Ugandan rural parents' sceptical feelings and negative, almost hostile attitudes towards mother tongue usage in education. This implies that the parents would appreciate their children being given access to a language that would enable them compete favourably with the urban learners. Such feelings are not only among the Ugandan rural parents. In South Africa, the black parents are also demanding that their children be taught in English too (Banda, 2003; De Klerk, 2002). One could say that this category subscribes to Bamgbose's first view, which supports the continued use of English. In addition, these parents seem to be in agreement with Hasan's (1996) remarks that the more reluctant we are to recognise overtly the importance of language; the more dangerous it can be as a tool of domination, both inside and outside pedagogic contexts. This, she says, is important because language is just too powerful a means of control to be ignored or set aside in the prime-controlling environment of pedagogic action (Hasan, 1996: 383). The rural parents seem to see things that way too.

Analysing the pedagogical contexts shows that the spread of English and its soaring social and academic status has also affected the teachers' and learners' attitudes. In Uganda, for example, speaking English is prestigious and tells those present that you are educated. As already noted Kwesiga says that speaking English is the envy of every Ugandan. It is the language used in official discussions and in most of the academic situations and in all post-primary institutions. In urban areas the teachers use it even in pre-primary and primary schools in and out of the classroom. Hence the students' attitudes in respect to the use and study of the English language are affected by the attitudes and examples of their (urban) peers, teachers and parents (McGroarty, 1996: 4).

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the national examinations that determine the roadmap of one's life are set in English and the learners are required to write them in English. The issue here is that failing the national exam at the end of P 7 (PLE) spells doom for a learner as it usually means the end of formal education. In the competitive world we live in, this means that the learner who has failed so early in this kind of system will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to get the qualifications or the diplomas which Stercq talks about. Thus a job will be equally difficult to find. And yet it is no secret that the pupils whose natural and academic development diverges from or falls below the pedagogic standards, in this case set by the education system, typically belong to the disadvantaged classes of the community (Hasan, 1996: 391).

The disadvantaged classes of the community, in the Ugandan case, are the rural population. Given the current language in education policy in Uganda it becomes rather difficult to dismiss these views. This is so because the policy clearly endorses that one group gets the supportive literacy practices that come with fluency in the

language of the academic discourse while the other group does not. In Hasan's terms this is constructing willing failures. She explains that the construction of one section of the community as willing failures despite 'good teaching' is a strong reason for disquiet with teaching and consequently with the learners' achievements in that community. This scenario has had a strong impact on the attitudes and choices parents are making regarding the preferred medium of instruction for their children, and thus intimate at the ideologies behind the choices. It therefore becomes difficult to blame the parents for preferring English as a medium of instruction for their children because they see the products of an English- medium education getting rewards in terms of lucrative jobs and upward social mobility (Bamgbose 2000: 88). One could view this as prejudice in favour of English, but it turns out to be a kind of 'justifiable' prejudice in the eyes of the concerned parents.

Pursuing the issue of competition one can envisage the kind of pressure that is exerted on the teachers as far as getting good results is concerned. Many of them are usually threatened by dismissal whenever the examination results are not 'good enough' (Kittitas, 2005). Thus, being aware of Poynton's view that language is a basic resource with which we organise and build our world and is thus a fundamental part of the education process (Poynton 1990) and with the aim of preparing the learners to pass the national exams, if only to save their jobs, the teachers, especially those from the urban areas, feel obliged to equip their learners with the most powerful tool they have to use as they write the exams – the language of the exams (English in Uganda's case). This, in the end, turns out to dictate the course of action and the way teaching is done.

As regards the learners' attitudes, it is a fact that a positive attitude about language and language learning may be as much the result of success as the cause as McGroarty (1996) observes. In the Ugandan situation it is easy to see how success ensues from attitudes especially for the urban learners. Their parents help them to

develop the best attitudes, attributing their own success to the knowledge of English they turn out to be good models and they endeavour to put facilities in place to make them acquire the desired fluency. Seeing their parents successful in life encourages the children to practice the language of the academic discourse. The rural learner's attitudes are shaped by acceptance of the fact that they badly need a language they can use effectively during the writing of exams if they are to pass and hope to be more successful than their parents are. Their parents can only help them through encouragement.

McGroarty goes ahead to point out that the positive attitudes need to be enhanced by effective strategies that enable the students to take advantage of instructional opportunities presented to them. The urban teachers and parents reserve no efforts in looking for and utilising any effective strategies that they may find, such as helping their children with homework and buying books and other learning materials while, limited by their own levels of education and resources, the rural parents cannot go very far in this respect. To crown it all, a vast body of research including McGroarty (1996), Baker (1994), Holub (1992), Wiley (1996) and William (1992) highlights the fact that the status of a language in a society, whether native or second language, further shapes the social climate for language study. It is the climate prevailing in Uganda today and the worldwide growth of English that has gone a long way in shaping the parents', teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the use of English as the medium of instruction. This comes in the wake of the fact that the instruction in the mother tongue does not seem to prepare the learners for later education (and examinations), which are premised on good linguistic skills in English.

## **2.6: Effective teaching and methodology**

Underachievement in school is realised when learners fail to score to the expectations of the school, the teachers, the parents, community and the whole education system. As already stated, the poor grades breed disappointment, regrets and frustration for all

the parties involved. When the good grades are not forthcoming many factors are held responsible. I concede that the factors involved in such situations are many and diverse. The factors Baker (1994: 171) lists as affecting second language instruction do not only affect the L2 instruction but also the learning/education process in general. Among the many is the teacher. This section highlights the effect of the teacher and the methodologies the teachers use in class on the learning process and consequently on the learners' achievements.

Bearing in mind the discussion in the preceding section I acknowledge the view held by Banda (2003) when he points out that the problem of underachievement of learners, specifically, the rural ones, (especially in the Iganga district in Uganda), could include the language of instruction as seen above, but goes far beyond language choices. The Plowden Report of 1967 on the role of the teacher reiterates that there can be no doubt of the importance or the exacting nature of the teacher's task. The report points out that the future of education depends on the teachers, their skills and on their good will, far more than on organisation or on buildings. This study acknowledges the importance of organisation and/or the buildings but the salient point being made is that the role of the teacher in the learning process is crucial and that the importance of methodology in learners' achievement cannot be underestimated.

Taking cognisance of the fact that teachers, in the ideal situation, are supposed to be professionally trained (Edelsky 1996: 174) to facilitate learning, one would take it that their main task would be to ensure that every child entrusted to their care achieves optimally from their stay in school. To do this, the teachers have several roles to play. The most subtle role of teachers is to create a relaxed, trusting and supportive atmosphere in which learning can take place (Naidoo, 1994: 74). This calls for dexterity on the teachers' part. This dexterity, which is likely to facilitate the teachers' effectiveness, stems from a variety of aspects, which include inter alia,

training, the will to work and inter-personal relationships. These three aspects are of utmost importance. McGill-Franzen and Goatley (2001) in their research about children's achievement submitted that often even modest professional development had tangible impact on the teachers' knowledge and, ultimately on the children's achievements. This is a point worthy of much attention. Baker (1992) and McGroarty (1996: 10) also assert that the success or failure in language instruction (and/or education in general) greatly depends on the nature of instruction received. If the instruction learners receive is wanting, then chances are that their performance will be low. To this effect, Baker (1994: 187) gives us useful hints about teacher effectiveness that can work as well for all teachers as they do for those dealing with the language minority student.

I acknowledge the fact that some untrained teachers may do a good job, but research indicates that to be able to give standard and adequate instruction, teachers need to undergo training. It is a fact that good training can polish the tips given here. Stubbs (1994: 209), drawing on the Cox (1989) and Kingman (1988) reports, emphasises this point when she points out that comprehensive teacher training programs are necessary if the teachers themselves are to know enough about language and subject content to teach it coherently. Distinctly, Hasan (1996: 389) advises that teachers need expertise to understand the nature of what they are teaching. That expertise enables them to employ effective methods. Based on this one may not be completely wrong to observe that the rural learners' poor performance could be partly a result of the fact that most of the untrained teachers are found in rural areas (see table 1 in Appendix A).

This infers that teachers need to be trained. But training per se may not be enough, they need to receive the kind of training that equips them with both the required skills and the content to prepare them for the work awaiting them in the field. This done, the teachers will be in a position to manage the teaching/learning processes. Good

training will enable them, as Strevens (1989: 50) observes, to recognise that if they are to be professionally successful, they need to achieve a superior teacher-learner relationship which can be renewed from lesson to lesson and which in the experience of the learners transforms the classes from a once-off occasion into a growing, involving, incremental learning progression. This calls for dexterity, which, more often than not, comes with a growing professional experience. Strevens encapsulates it thus:

Experienced teachers recognise a distinction between on the one hand those lessons which as it were stand alone, with their teaching/learning content only incidentally related to other lessons, and on the other hand sequences of lessons which hang together and develop a thread or series of learning threads from one to another... (Strevens, 1989: 50).



Creating an atmosphere that can facilitate a growing, involving, incremental learning progression may not, as (Naidoo 1994) observes, be easy for teachers especially in the overcrowded, under-resourced rural classrooms (Francis 2000: 34) like those in the Iganga district in Uganda.

All these matters point to one important fact: that professional training has a tremendous role to play in shaping the teachers' career. It equips them with both knowledge and skills that go a long way in shaping the methodology they use in their teaching and handling of their learners in various situations. Short of such training the whole teaching/learning process stands in jeopardy.

While acknowledging the great role played by teachers in the education process one must realise that the teaching and learning happens in a formal school environment.

The school is normally a big plant with many activities going on at the same time and therefore takes commendable efforts to manage. This brings to this discussion the part played by leadership and the administration and/or organisation of the day-to-day activities that take place in the school. The success of the school largely depends on the management acumen of the head teacher. It takes a good head teacher to manage, organise and co-ordinate all the activities in the school in such a way that everything runs smoothly. It requires a good teacher training background, managerial and leadership skills. This study will demonstrate that the head teachers of urban schools seem to be well-equipped both with good training and administrative and management skills that help them to do a good job. Among the factors that make a school effective, is purposeful and formidable leadership by the head teacher and involvement of the deputy head teacher. De Beer et al (2000: 197) enunciate the importance of good leadership thus:

Leadership has a direct influence on the success of an enterprise. The type of leadership that is applied largely determines whether the enterprise will prosper or fail.

They go on to observe that:

In practice there are numerous examples of struggling enterprises that have been transformed into success through excellent leadership. However, there are also many examples of many enterprises that have been ruined by poor leadership... We can therefore depict leadership as a pivotal point that causes an enterprise to swing in the direction of failure or success.

They conclude that it is good leadership that ensures that the enterprises' objectives are achieved successfully. In terms of education it is an indisputable fact that the

learners' success is the kingpin objective that underlies all the activities that take place in the school (Sparks, 1994). This is the dream cherished and worked for by the teachers and the school leadership. The point being made here is that the success of what goes on in school heavily relies on the commitment and the type of leadership in place. While strong, organised and informed leadership can contribute to improvement in a school weak and disorganised leadership can negatively affect what goes on in the school, which will in turn affect the learners' grades and academic achievement in general.

## **2.7: Conclusion**

This study originates from the observation that while the examination results show that the urban learners successfully come to grips with their academic challenges, the rural learners are not coping well with the same challenges: a fact that plays a big role in intensifying the rift which exists between the urban and the rural population in Uganda. This literature review demonstrates that this imbalance starts almost at birth, if not long before, and is entrenched in the lives of people and is made explicit in the literacy practices the children are acculturated into both at home and in school. It has also explicated that exposure to the academic discourse (be it English or mother tongue) both at home and at school, the teachers', learners' and parents' attitudes, and the teachers' professionalism, devotedness and methodology have tremendous influence on the learners' ultimate educational/ academic performance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1: Introduction

The impetus underlying this study is the disparity that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and urban learners in the Iganga district and in Uganda as a whole. This situation does not augur well because, as pointed out earlier, the majority of the Ugandan population lives in rural areas. I acknowledge the fact that the factors that can account for such an inequality are many and they take various forms, but in the bid to decipher the possible causes I chose to scrutinise the literacy practices (LPs) to which the learners in the two dichotomous settings are exposed and how these LPs impact on their performances. Many literacy studies that have been carried out have used the New Literacy Studies (NLS) as their conceptual and theoretical framework to explain various issues, which I too found useful to my work.

I used ethnographic methodology to carry out the research. I held interviews and focus group discussions with various stakeholders as I wanted to get their views about the rural-urban learner performance differences. Bearing in mind that our words are never neutral (Fiske 1994), and that literacies are also not neutral, I was aware that the respondents' responses would be loaded with inherent meanings and attitudes. Therefore, I used the NLS and CDA as the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this study. NLS facilitates an in-depth understanding of what literacy is in a particular a social context, such as the rural and urban settings in this study. It helps in identifying the specific literacy practices that exist in each context and highlights their impact on people's lives as well as on learners' achievements. After delving into literacy as a social practice and literacy practices as those practices in

which people engage in reading and writing in their lives I needed the CDA analytical stance to enable me to decipher and explain the stakeholders' views, attitudes and ideologies that underlie the choices they make about the literacies and the literacy practices in which they acculturate their children.

As far as this study is concerned, the relationship between these two frameworks is that both of them relate to the social aspects in people's lives. This is so because people have underlying attitudes and ideologies that influence the choices they make, in this case about the languages to be used in education and the literacy practices to instil in the children. Here, then, NLS gives us the stakeholders' choices and CDA enables us to understand the reasons for those choices. Hence, these frameworks play a complementary role in this study. The fact that there are choices being made presupposes attitudes and ideologies and power relations inherent in those choices, which we can understand best if we use CDA. This gives rise to the need to use the two frameworks together.



### **3.2: The Autonomous Model and the Ideological Model debate: Towards New Literacy Studies**

Barton (1999: 20) points out that the word *literacy* (derived from illiteracy) is fairly recent in the English language. The origins of the word literacy can be traced in the word *literate*, which first appeared in a full-length Oxford English Dictionary in 1432, but it (*literacy*) does not appear in a dictionary until 1924. The use of the word literacy can only be traced back to 1883 when it first appeared in a sentence in the New England Journal of Education. Other words related to literacy are illiterate and illiteracy. *Illiterate* dates from 1556 and it is the only one of these words that ever appeared in Shakespeare's works. *Illiteracy* appeared in a dictionary in 1839. But

tracing the uses of these words, Barton finds that the use of the word illiteracy dates as far back as 1660.

The earliest uses of the words *illiterate* and *literate* and hence *illiteracy* and *literacy* show that these words meant being uneducated or educated, unlearned or learned. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century meanings were added to these words to include being able to read and write. The word literate was then used to describe the state of those who were able to read and write. The meanings of these words have continued to change over time.

As I pointed out earlier, for a long time, literacy was conventionally defined as the ability to read and write (Wasik, Dobbins & Herrmann, 2001: 444). But many scholars, including Herbert and Richardson (2001: 121); Bholá (1994: 26); Heath (1980: 123); Gee (1991) and Besneir and Street (1994: 11) have long since revisited this view and found that the concept of literacy is quite elusive and difficult to define (see section 2.3).

Heath (1980: 123) explains that the concept of literacy covers a multiplicity of meanings, and many of its definitions carry implicit but generally unrecognised views of its function. She explains that this implies what literacy can do for individuals or specific communities. Kerka (1991) suggests that the meaning, uses, and value of literacy are not the same for all members of society. This study acknowledges the fact that the word literacy is fluid in the sense that it means different things to different people and in different contexts, and that consequently different people define literacy differently.

Efforts to understand the meaning of literacy reveal that the term has undergone growth and extension over the years. One example of such extension has been (in

many parts of Africa e.g. in Uganda) equating literacy with ‘the 3Rs’: reading, writing and arithmetic, which have been inherent in adult literacy programmes. The basic literacy practices implicit in this notion are the ability to count and calculate. It should be pointed out here that, even when the word ‘literacy’ is held in that regard, many people who are described as illiterate can actually count and calculate satisfactorily to meet their everyday needs.

The concept of literacy is a broad one and exploring it brings up various meanings. The term has also been used to mean the same as knowledge and skills, for example, legal literacy or computer literacy. Yet other uses of the term literacy have developed from the consideration of the roles literacy has played in the development of various institutions including law, religion, economics, politics and science. These authors, among others, have further explained how literacy leads to the development of a kind of rationality, giving rise to the idea that ‘illiterate’ people lack the powers of logical reasoning. This is the view embedded in what Street has called the ‘autonomous model’ of literacy.

Street (1995) observes that according to modern schooling and many Literacy Agencies such as UNESCO world-wide, literacy is represented as a set of functional skills, the acquisition of which will automatically improve people’s cognitive functioning and equip them with greater facility of abstraction, logical thought and meta-linguistic awareness thus making them eligible for jobs and economic success. This, he postulates, is the basic principle of the autonomous model of literacy. In his own words Street articulates it distinctly:

The autonomous model of literacy works from the assumption that literacy itself – autonomously – will have effects on other social and cognitive practice...that as people acquire literacy, so their cognitive functioning will be enhanced, with greater facility of abstraction,

logical thought and meta-linguistic awareness. Similarly, social consequences are assumed to follow from literacy, such as ‘modernisation’, ‘progress’ and economic rationality (Street, 1996: 2; 2000: 23).

According to this autonomous model, acquiring literacy in the form of ‘functional skills’ is concomitant to becoming intelligent enough to be eligible for jobs, to becoming progressive and economically well-off. The proponents of this model seem to think modernisation and progress are a part of the package that their form of literacy delivers to people. To them, once people acquire literacy everything falls into place. Thus introducing that literacy to poor, ‘illiterate’ people, villages, urban youth etc. will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their ‘illiteracy’ in the first place. They hardly ever consider the other matters, such as resources and technical skills entailed in the processes of modernisation and/or progress.



This is the notion of literacy that is highly reflected in government circles in many countries including the UK. However, what happens in society does not always seem to hold with this. Much as it could be true to a certain extent that some ‘literate’ people are cognitively and economically superior, it is rather simplistic to assume that all ‘literate’ people have superior cognitive skills in everything and are always economically well-off and that all those who lack the kind of literacy as envisaged by this model are backward, cognitively inferior and economically incapacitated. This is so because, quite often, we encounter ‘educated’/‘literate’ people whom this model would acknowledge as having acquired literacy that cannot perform effectively even in their own areas of ‘specialty’. In fact, according to Street, this kind of perception of literacy turns out to be seen as a means of enhancing processes of discriminatory power relations, practices, competing discourses and hegemony, rather than for

exploring the great divide and the rationality of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ societies (Street, 2000: 25). In so doing literacy then continues to widen the divide between those acknowledged as ‘literate’ and the ‘illiterate’ by the autonomous model. I will discuss the power issue later.

The fact that what the autonomous model depicts is not always true in real life situations gives rise to other alternate views such as those explicit in what Street has referred to as the ‘ideological model’ of literacy. The ideological model of literacy forms a broader and socio-culturally sensitive perspective (Gee, 1991; Besneir and Street, 1994). According to this model, literacy varies from one context to another. According to Street, the ideological model posits that:

...literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. It is also always embedded in social practices, such as those of a particular job market or a particular educational context and the effects of learning that particular literacy will depend on those particular contexts. Literacy, in this sense, is contested, both in its meaning and its practice, hence particular versions of it are always “ideological”, and they are always rooted in a particular world-view and in a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalise others (Street, 2003: 2, 2001: 7).

This implies that literacy is to be looked at and understood from a very broad perspective, since what constitutes literacy in one context might not be viewed as literacy in another context. The important point here is the ability to identify the literacy practices that constitute literacy in a particular context, the roles those

practices play in the participants' lives and the value the participants attach to them. This is the view embedded in the New Literacy Studies (NLS). As I pointed out elsewhere, NLS posits that literacy is a social practice, (Gee, 2000; Street, 2001; Barton, 1999; Baynham, 2000, 2001; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996). This thesis is rooted in the fact that literacy pervades the political, social, cultural and economic aspects of people's lives. This is because literacy is embedded in the activities of people's ordinary lives whether or not they regularly read books or do much writing (Barton, 1999: 4).

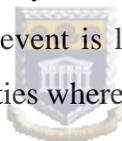
Coming to grips with the concept of literacy as a social practice entails looking at the literacy events in people's daily lives. In NLS, the concept of literacy takes into account the literacy activities, events and practices that are embedded in people's lives, including among many others, reading newspapers, filling in word puzzles, discussing academic topics or listening to radio programmes. It also includes how people interact with these activities in socio-cultural contexts. What is being articulated here is that these activities take place in social and cultural contexts and participating in them involves making choices and giving them meaning. Examples of those choices include which newspaper one should read, which TV or radio programme to watch or listen to or which academic topics people or learners discuss. These choices are governed by both explicit and implicit reasons, which differ from one individual to another and, more significantly to this study, from community to community, as from rural to urban areas. In the case of this study those activities relate to the urban areas. Indeed, most of the urban people are better placed to deal with them than the rural people, most of whom cannot read and write or who simply cannot afford newspapers.

But, drawing upon these points of view, this study goes a step further to say that a comprehensive definition of literacy should include the ability to read, write, express oneself, listen for information, seek and gain knowledge and to use that knowledge

and the available resources to solve problems or address situations people might encounter in life or in particular social contexts. This is to say that literacy should not necessarily have to deal only with local events and literacies, but should entail considering trends that incorporate the acquisition, mastery and use of the global literacies as well. Literacy should, in the main, empower a human being to exist meaningfully as an individual, as part of the community and as part of the global world. It should equip one with knowledge that gives that person the desirable identity in any context.

Delving into the tenets of NLS presents us with a new tradition in considering the nature of literacy. It is a tradition that does not focus so much on acquisition of a set of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice. Street explains that this entails the recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, and also contested in relations of power. It entails asking what counts as literacy at any time and place, asking ‘whose literacies’ are dominated and whose are marginalised or resistant (Street, 2003: 1). In this case, for example, the rural literacy practices are generally marginalised and not useful in terms of the examination demands of the Ugandan education system. These views are implicit in NLS. NLS posits that in practice literacy varies from one context to another and from one culture to another and, therefore, the effects of the different literacies also vary in different conditions. This view is in a bid to challenge the autonomous approach, which “simply imposes the western concepts of literacy on to other cultures or within a country, those of one class or cultural group onto other groups”. Acknowledging all this enables the appreciation of literacy practices and/or multiple literacies as we encounter them in specific contexts (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996: 3). The specific contexts in the case of this study are the home, the community, or the school in relation to national and global contexts.

To understand the concept of literacy practices, we need first to grasp what is meant by literacy events. The phrase 'literacy event' derives its meaning from the socio-linguistic idea of a 'speech event' (Hymes 1972), which according to Anderson et al (1980: 59-65) is a social occasion during which a person "attempts to comprehend graphic signs". Heath (1982a: 93) expounds this by stating that a literacy event is "any social occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretive process". In line with that Street (2000: 21) goes a step further and teaches us that 'literacy events' is a useful concept because it helps us to focus on a particular situation where things are happening and where you can see them happening. He calls this the 'classic' literacy event in which we are able to observe an event, which involves reading and/or writing, and begin to draw out its characteristics. Barton (1999: 36) extends this argument by saying that a literacy event is an event that includes any activity which involves the written word. He adds that for some events, especially within the education context, the explicit purpose of participating in a literacy event is learning. He also goes on to say that literacy events are the particular activities where literacy has a role to play.



In essence, then, this implies that, according to these scholars, literacy events are those events/activities that deal with reading and writing and how human beings use those skills to manage their lives. These activities are highly valued as part of literacy by the New Literacy Studies (NLS), which this study uses as a framework for exploring the link between literacy practices and learners' academic achievements with respect to the rural and urban divide. The concept of literacy events leads onto that of 'literacy practice'.

Barton defines literacy practices as the cultural means of utilising literacy, upon which people draw in a literacy event (Barton, 1999: 37). In line with that Street explains that by 'literacy practices' he means a broad concept, one that is pitched at a high level of abstraction, referring to both the behaviour and the social and cultural

conceptualisations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing. He calls this an alternative orientation of the 'ideological' view of literacy that emphasises, first the social nature of literacy, and second, the multiple, and sometimes the contested, nature of literacy practices (Street, 1984).

Street also informs us that he employs the phrase 'literacy practices' as a means of focusing upon the "social practices and conceptions of reading and writing" (Street, 1984: 1; 2000: 20; 2003: 2). He goes on to add that the complex concept of literacy practices takes into account both events/activities and the social models of literacy that participants bring to bear upon those events and that give meaning to them. This is to say that the concept of literacy practices attempts to deal with the events and the patterns of activity around literacy, linking them to something broader of a cultural and social kind. Part of that broadening involves attending to the fact that in a literacy event we have brought to it concepts, social models regarding what the nature of this practice is, what makes it work and what gives it meaning (Street, 2000: 21). Hence, literacy practices, in this context refers to the broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts.

Street further explains that understanding these concepts has to be done at both the methodological and the empirical level, and that by doing so, we characterise the shift from observing literacy events to conceptualising literacy practices (Street, 2003: 2). Doing this requires ethnographical means whereby one must talk to people, listen to them and link their immediate experiences of reading and writing to other things they do in their lives. In this way, one can completely access what it is that gives meaning to the literacy events in which those people engage, and thus get to the gist of their literacy practices. This becomes a way of accounting for the importance of the literacy practices in people's lives, and thus of viewing literacy as socially constructed.

This is well illustrated in Street's fieldwork in Iran where what emerged as literacy practices were uses and meanings of literacy that were identifiable around three domains of social activity: the maktab literacy practices, the schooled literacy practices, and the commercial literacy practices (Street, 2000: 22). This implies that there can be various literacy practices in a specific community, each serving different purposes in that community and constructing different identities with different values and ideologies. In this case, the maktab literacy was identified and associated with Qur'anic learning and the social hierarchy dominated by men. Schooled literacy was associated with school learning and modernisation which was characterised by the rural-urban drift in search of urban lives and jobs. Commercial literacy emerged as a result of and was associated with economic activities accruing from the country's economic boom at that time. These three constructed different identities for the different people who engaged in them and each held different values based on different ideologies. It is noteworthy that some people could have engaged in only one while others engaged in two or in all three literacies at the same time. It is this diverse nature of things that brings scholars in this field to adopt the phrase 'multiple literacies' to acknowledge the multiplicitous nature of literacy in any given cultural context (Heath, 1983; Street, 1993b, 1995; Barton, 1999; Barton et al, 1999; Banda, 2003).

As already stated, this study uses the New Literacy Studies (NLS) as a theoretical framework to establish and analyse the literacy practices in rural and urban areas in the Iganga district in Uganda. I have endeavoured to discuss some of the tenets of NLS in an attempt to evolve an in-depth understanding of the link that exists between the literacy practices in which learners are involved and their academic performance. As my springboard I use the notion embedded in NLS depicting literacy practices as those practices in which individuals are involved in ways of reading and writing and using written texts that are bound up in social processes, which locate the individual

actions within social and cultural processes (Martin-Jones and Jones 2000: 5). I scrutinise the rural and the urban settings of the Iganga district to establish the literacy practices to which the learners are exposed in each of the settings. Thereafter, I proceed to explore the impact of those practices on the learners' academic endeavours and their resultant achievements.

The New Literacy Studies postulate that literacy is a social practice, (Gee, 2000; Street, 2001, 2003; Barton, 1999; Baynham, 2000, 2001; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996). This implies that literacy takes place in, and derives meaning from a social context. The context is determined by the time, the milieu, the participants, the activity taking place, the value attached to that activity and the anticipated and/or achieved results of the event. NLS refers to that kind of context as the social and cultural context. Thus, literacy becomes meaningful when there is a literacy event/activity/practice taking place, which is of value to the participants (and that could be of interest to researchers).

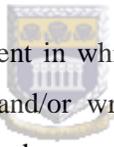


In the context of this study, for example, in the past and to some extent even now, teaching children in the rural areas about daily survival, interpersonal relationships and community harmony were, and in many places are still, taken as literacy. That is because those were/are very vital skills and people attach(ed) high value to them. It should be pointed out here these traditional skills were/are oral-based. They were/are usually passed on from one generation to another through speech. But in the urban areas the meaning and value assigned to literacy have increasingly been the social practices that are geared towards the schooled literacy. The literacies valued in urban areas are in the main read-written based literacies. The urban parents start teaching their children how to read and write from a very tender age. It should be noted that of recent the rural areas have also widened their definition of literacy to include the schooled literacy, since they have realised that that kind of literacy carries many social and economic implications and benefits. This makes scrutinising literacy

practices associated with the home and schooled literacies, specifically, from the NLS perspective critical to this study.

As already noted, NLS depicts literacy practices as those practices in which individuals are involved in ways of reading and writing and using written texts that are bound up in social processes which locate the individual actions within social and cultural processes (Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000: 5). The fact that the participants are operating in a social and cultural context makes the practice a social practice. This study takes literacy practices to encompass literacy events as well. Street describes literacy events as a particular situation where things are happening and where you can see them happening (Street, 2000: 21).

He further adds that:



This is the classic literacy event in which we are able to observe an event that involves reading and/or writing and begin to draw out characteristics: here, we might observe one kind of event, an academic event, and there another, which is quite different...(Street, 2000: 21).

In this study I analyse three basic contexts in which that classic event usually takes place: the home, the school and the community. This study interests itself with the different literacy practices in which the rural and urban learners get involved in these three different contexts. The study seeks to find out how similar or different these practices are and the differential impact of their similarity and/or difference on the learners' academic achievements.

The proponents of NLS posit that literacy practices vary within cultural contexts, that there is not a single, monolithic, autonomous literacy (discussed above) whose consequences for individuals and societies can be read off as a result of its intrinsic characteristics: rather there are literacies or literacy practices whose character and

consequences have to be specified in each context (Finnegan, 1973, 1988; Gee, 1990; Barton, 1994a; Barton & Ivanic, 1991; Street, 1985, 1995, 2000; Collins, 1995). This means looking first at the urban homes and identifying the kinds of literacy practices which exist in those homes and in which the children are involved, such as learning the alphabet from the age of two years and doing their homework with the help of their parents. Second, it means looking at literacy practices in the rural homes, such as children reading and interpreting their school reports for their parents and reading letters for the parents and writing replies to those letters on their parents' behalf. The examples of activities/literacy practices described here are all different in character; all have different consequences for the participants and are taking place in specified contexts. It should be noted that whatever is happening in each context is of very high value to the participants and constructs different identities for them, and is based on different ideologies. All of it reveals much to the researcher who is studying the whole process. NLS analyses each context, appreciates the literacy practices therein and tends to expect educators to draw from the existing knowledge to help the learners advance in school.



Appreciation of literacies as we encounter them in specific contexts is important and can be very useful. For instance, appreciating and using the local home-based literacies can be of great help to teachers as they do their work. The teachers can use those practices to motivate the learners and make them appreciate the value of education. For example, teachers in the Iganga district can use listening skills, which are developed in children through listening to folk stories told by the parents, to teach oral and/or written comprehension.

However, as attempts are made to appreciate the local literacies, Street (and indeed this study) warns that there is a need to be careful and guard against what he has described as simply “romanticising the local literacies”. This, he says, can be dangerous as some of those literacy practices may no longer be appropriate, may be

wanting or might require a lot of expertise before they could be of much use in a modern, indeed post-modern, condition where high communicative skills are required, including formal literacy (Street, 1996: 4). An illustration of this effect can still be given using the folk story telling literacy. This is a common literacy practice especially in rural areas. It can be useful as long as the teacher is able to pick from it the good skills, such as listening attentively for information, and use them effectively. But in most cases, when story telling is done, the children/listeners remain passive and this, coupled with the cultural demands, deny the children the opportunity to ask questions and/or discuss the content of the stories with the story teller. This inhibits the development of the children's discursive ability, which is very essential to the education process.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that story telling is an art that involves implicit narrative skills. Francis (2000) informs us that there are good and bad storytellers (see also Gough and Bock (2001) about good versus bad praise singers). In the past the skills embedded in the art of narrating stories used to be acquired through extensive and intensive apprenticeship with a good orator. It may not be correct to assume the teachers in schools are good and/or equipped with good narrative skills and therefore, we cannot assume that storytelling is always done well enough to benefit the learners. The difference here is that the urban learners have access to books, and hence to good apprenticeship to 'narrators' while the rural learners depend on the oral narrators whose skills cannot be relied on.

In addition, the whole story telling event is oral. This means that the children do not get the opportunity to use the stories to practise writing. We are well aware that many current education systems and specifically the one in Uganda, demand explicit written communication, but this cannot be developed over night. This means that it could easily be detrimental to hold on to storytelling as literacy per se and then to use it for most of the teaching, simply because it is a local literacy that is highly valued in

the rural community. There is need for the teachers to be resourceful so that they can use the stories in more constructive ways and for as long as it helps them to foster formal literacy.

Street (1995, 2001: 8, 2003) suggests that engaging with literacy is always a social act, even from the outset. He goes on to add that the ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact is a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants, especially the new learners and their position in relations of power (Street, 2003: 2). As this study will demonstrate in due course, this makes much sense, especially, in the context where the relationship and interactions between the learners and their teachers in one setting is very different from the one that exists between the learners and their teachers in another setting. It can be argued that the different relationships affect the ideas the learners in each setting hold about literacy and this directly or indirectly impacts on the way the learners respond in classroom situations. Seeing that their teachers hold the kind of literacy and knowledge being imparted in high esteem, the urban learners may tend to pay more attention and work hard and thus become high achievers, while the rural learners, whose teachers do not appear to hold their own literacy and the kind of literacy and knowledge being imparted, in high esteem, end up lax and thus poor achievers.

NLS have also challenges the dominant development model, which has its roots in the autonomous model discussed above, in which it is believed that the acquisition of their version of literacy necessarily leads to development. In so doing, NLS advocates for what they have referred to as ‘real’ literacies, participatory literacy that takes a more socially-oriented perspective and focuses more precisely on local conditions (Street, 2000: 26). Studies in NLS have focused on making the existing literacies that people already have, useful, even if, according to the parameters which define literacy in the autonomous model, such literacies would not be recognised as literacy at all.

This, in essence, implies taking stock of the autonomous model of literacy with all the criticism it has received and being wary of romanticising the NLS views of literacy. Thus, NLS chooses to focus on a hybrid model. This involves recognition of the best in each model to construct the hybridity which forms the core of the NLS approach to literacy acquisition. Drawing from studies carried out by Kulick & Stroud (1993) Street points out that:

The result of local-global encounters around literacy is a new hybrid rather than a single essentialised version of either. It is these hybrid literacy practices that NLS focuses upon rather than either romanticising the local or conceding the dominant privileging of the supposed 'global' (Street, 2003: 4).



The 'global' here in Street's sense refers to literacy advocated for in the autonomous model.

This is of great value to researchers and educators as it enables them to harness the local/home literacies that learners bring with them as they come to school. This is important because the educators would end up using those home literacies to effectively develop and foster learners' school literacies in the process of preparing them for the rigours of the national examinations. This has to involve understanding the children's emerging experiences with literacy in their own cultural milieus to address broader educational questions about learning literacy and switching between the literacy practices in different contexts. Examples to this effect can be located in Wagner (1993) and Gregory & Williams (2000: 53) who report that the capacity for memorisation which the Moroccan and Indian children had acquired from the Qur'anic and Bengali classes, was useful in classroom situations and that the lengthy

periods spent on Bengali and Qur'anic instruction (sessions used to last two hours without a break) enabled the children to concentrate over an extended period of time. The value of memorisation and good attention span in learning situations cannot be underestimated.

Exploiting local/home literacies in learning situations takes cognisance of the pedagogy of multiliteracies, which is embedded in the theories propounded in the New Literacy Studies. NLS emphasise that literacy is not just about reading and writing in a particular 'teacherly' manner as taught in an education setting. The proponents of NLS are of the view that a comprehensive definition of literacy needs to take into account the literacy activities embedded in people's daily lives (Baynham, 2001, 2000; Baynham & Massing, 2000; Street, 2001; Barton, 1999; Banda, 2003; Machet, 2001). NLS makes it clear that good educational practices today require the facilitator to build on what learners bring to class (Street, 2001). According to these scholars, this entails realising, appreciating and taking the advantages of the everyday literacies found in the learners' communities, and using them to foster learning in school. A lot of research, including the above, has documented the importance of the literacy practices a child is acculturated into and how those practices impact on that child's academic achievement. Machet (2001) says:

Family practices actively channel children's development through the creation of sets of experiences and opportunities...Family members arrange activities (such as reading to the child) in which the child's interest and needs are the central focus. Socialisation occurs indirectly when the child observes the family members using reading and writing in everyday activities... (Machet, 2001: 3).

The proponents of NLS believe that as children grow, they get acculturated into the literacy practices that surround them. They go ahead to explain that the kinds of practices children are acculturated into will impact on their lives more especially in education, (Machet, 2001: 4; Barton, 1999; Saxena, 1994; Wagner, 1993). It is on the basis of that, that this study endeavours to explore the literacy practices which exist in the rural and urban areas in the Iganga district in Uganda and to analyse these practices' impact on the learners' academic achievements. Could it be that the practices in one community acculturate learners into academic discourses better than those in the other community? If this were the case, what are the supportive literacies that exist in one community and not in the other? This underpins the conception of literacy as a social practice as relating to the situations in which people are able to participate in literacy practices to which they attach both meaning and value. In so doing those practices shape the people's ideologies, while at the same time the ideologies dictate the practices in which they will acculturate their children.



The above makes it clear that access and exposure to literacy practices is vital in the development of a child's literacy skills. Acknowledging this, the current study goes along with NLS and concedes that the literacy practices a learner is acculturated into play a very significant role in that learner's education. This could be one of the basic reasons why the urban learners perform well, as they are acculturated into literacy practices which are supportive to their academic work. Many of them come to school with the knowledge of how books work and others even join primary school when they already know how to read and write some words. On the other hand, learners who are not acculturated into such practices will start from scratch when they come to school. This study observes and will demonstrate then that learners cannot bring supportive literacy practices to class if they have not been acculturated into them (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

The issue of acculturation is of pertinent interest to this study. Acculturation into reading and writing is critical to the understanding of the significance of everyday literacies to accessing the academic discourse. This is so because the ability to access the academic discourses is crucial to the understanding of the syllabus content. And learners can only have sound academic achievements if they comprehend the subject matter laid down in the syllabi. In view of this then the current study reiterates that the literacy practices a learner is acculturated into play a very significant role in that learner's education. Thus, acknowledging the value of the hybridity advocated by the NLS.

It will be argued in this study that everyday literacy practices and the availability of reading materials outside the classroom not only facilitate children's general literacy development, but could also give them access to the schooled literacy practices required for academic discourse. The relevance of this to the current study is that the learners who engage in supportive literacy practices and have plenty of access to reading and writing experiences before and while in school, are likely to perform well and, in fact, much better than those who do not have such opportunities. This gives the current study the impetus to carry out investigations into the literacy practices into which the Ugandan learners are acculturated, both at home and at school, and in rural and urban areas.

Street (2001: 7) posits that literacy is a social practice immersed in "socially constructed epistemological principles". This implies that literacy is also about how people's knowledge (past and present), identity and being influence the choices they make between different literacy practices and the way they interact with reading and writing, and also with the oral discourses. It implies that if a child comes to school with some knowledge of the written text or that a text is read from left to right and from top to bottom that child will have an advantage over, and is likely to make faster progress than, a child who does not have that knowledge. Knowledge about the

written text is important because the greatest part of the learning process deals with written texts: with reading and writing. This means that the earlier children learn to interact with written texts the better. Consequently, an urban child who gets into the system at about the age of two or three will be very advanced by the time the rural child is introduced to it at the age of seven/eight or even as late as ten. Along with this comes the issue of the language of the academic discourse. As most of the written materials in Uganda are in English, and rural learners use L1s as MOI, the rural learners still lose out, because they lack mastery in the language of the written texts. All these issues put the rural learners at a great disadvantage while they seem to favour the urban learners.

From the foregoing, I find the New Literacy Studies theories useful for the current study as I seek to find the causes of the disparity in the academic achievements existing between the rural and urban learners in the Iganga district in Uganda. I use NLS as the theoretical framework to establish and analyse the literacy practices found in both the rural and urban areas. In so doing I endeavour to examine all those practices as identified in their socio-cultural context, bearing in mind that while some children in Uganda, like some of those from urban areas, are witnesses to the existence of print and the relationship between print and people right from birth (Hall 1994), others, like some of those from rural areas, are not. I seek to establish how the literacy practices in each community influence what takes place in the classrooms and the impact such happenings could have on learners' academic achievements.

However, it should be noted that even though identifying and possibly using what is in the particular context is helpful, it is not enough. As already stated elsewhere, there is a need to realise that focusing on the local conditions and / or local literacies does not mean ignoring what is happening elsewhere; especially when the local conditions and the local literacy practices appear to be putting the participants at a disadvantage. This, study therefore, goes ahead to profess that NLS, as it stands at this level, is not

adequate on its own. The local literacies are not sufficient enough to help the learners advance much in today's world. This study goes a step beyond NLS and postulates that there is a need to look beyond the local situations and see what is happening elsewhere, to identify what can be done to modify the local literacies, and to find out what else can be done to help the learners (especially the rural ones) to access the global literacies and other skills that would enable them to perform better in their academic tasks. According to the current study, this view of the broader cultural and social context needs to take into account the global literacies. This would mean finding ways of enabling the transformation of the local literacies to make them embrace the global literacy. For example in the case above, those with the commercial literacy could also acquire computer literacy and use the internet to extend their trade frontiers.

This could, as Christie (2005) suggests, mean looking at how language is taught and/or used in each context (specifically the academic context). This translates into a serious need to intensify learners' (specifically the rural learners') exposure to language and particularly the language of the academic discourse: the grammar, the structures and the meaning, and to find out how all these can be used to help improve learners' work. This exposure to language becomes imperative because language is the tool we employ to build functionally relevant meanings. It is a basic resource with which we organise and build our world, and is thus a fundamental part of the education process (Poynton, 1990; Christie, 2005).

NLS also advocates for 'real literacies', participatory and empowering literacies that take a more socially oriented perspective and focuses more precisely on local conditions (Street, 2000: 26). But while appreciating this point, the current study argues that focusing more precisely on local conditions (even if that locality would mean taking the whole Uganda, which in this case would be difficult, since the urban and the rural have different conditions) is not enough because our existence as a

social being is no longer based on the local conditions in which we find ourselves. There is a lot of external influence that impacts on our lives, which we must endeavour to understand and embrace if we are to live comfortably and in harmony with others in the world today. Therefore, empowering literacy should have a wider focus which transcends local conditions: a focus that should be able to place humanity and learners in particular, in a global context.

This is in agreement with Christie's (2005) argument that real useful literacy is not just about a set of skills that will have effects on people's other social and cognitive practices, so that those people's cognitive functioning will be enhanced, giving them greater facility of abstraction, logical thought and meta-linguistic awareness, as posited by the autonomous model. Nor is it just about the ways in which people address reading and writing, or about people's conceptions of knowledge, identity and being, which is always embedded in *local conditions* (my emphasis) and social practices, as posited by the ideological model and NLS. Literacy should also be about the knowledge and use of the particular codes required by different situations, as in the case of education. In Uganda, national examinations are written in English. Consequently these codes need to include a good command of English grammar, of the structures and of the manners of doing things as demanded by the writing of examinations and by the education system as a whole, in order to level the ground for fair competition. This means that 'real literacies', participatory and empowering literacies, especially for the rural learners, should take a more academically oriented perspective and focus more precisely on the demands of the education system and society as a whole in Uganda. This means that since we are aware that language is used to express or realise social experiences and meanings, we need to stretch it to include academic experiences for all the learners. This is the gist of the systemic functional model of language (Christie, 2005; Eggins, 2004; Martin & Rose, 2004).

This formulation of literacy demands that as we teach children to use language to express or realise social experiences and meanings we need to teach them the grammatical and linguistic structures in which these experiences and meanings will be realised or expressed. The learners need to be equipped with the linguistic systems such as sets of options, for example, in terms of tenses and plural forms, which they can use in the process of expressing themselves both orally and in writing. This makes teaching of form and meaning in the education process imperative. Until the government changes the current policy, which favours English (Uganda government 1992), the learners, specifically the rural learners, need to be taught how to ‘mean’ in English so that they can be able to express themselves during the learning process, when writing examinations, and in other conditions in which they might find themselves, such as in job interviews. However, this has to be done with caution and in the context of the syllabus content so that time is not wasted on teaching very abstract concepts to primary school learners, which would leave them more confused.



While contesting the autonomous model of literacy the proponents of NLS postulate that the autonomous model glorifies the western form of literacy and tries to impose it on all people. They go on to posit that the autonomous model tends to imply that the lack of its form of literacy presupposes that one is ‘illiterate’ without pausing to find out what other types of literacies or literacy practices that person might be in possession of. This implies that the autonomous model seeks to place power into the hands of a section of the population: the section that possesses its form of literacy. In such cases those in power tend to retain the domination while pretending to provide access to facilities for the disempowered. This arouses this study’s concern. This concern stems from the apparent disparity between the sets of literacy practices as inherent in Uganda’s language in education policy the official document the education system follows. One becomes wary because Street warns against the unequal and hierarchical nature of literacy practices, which is highlighted by the ideological model. He observes that:

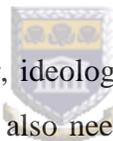
The ideological model begins from the premise that variable literacy practices are always rooted in power relations and that the apparent innocence and neutrality of the 'rules' serve to disguise the ways in which such power is maintained through literacy (Street, 1996: 5).

This is a very serious proposition, especially in view of Uganda's language policy in education and the situation on the ground (see Chapters Five).

However, all is not lost because according to NLS such a state of affairs can change if many people challenge it (Gee, 1990; McGregor, 2004: 4; Street, 1996: 5, 2001: 13). But to be able to challenge such situations, the disempowered must be able to recognise their plight and be willing to do something about the situation. This seems to be the case in the Iganga district, because, as the urban children constantly find themselves better equipped with favourable academic discourses, better examination results and eventually with better job opportunities the rural children have very little access, if any, to the academic discourses. They, therefore, get poor examination results and cannot compete effectively during the search for employment. The rural population seems to be realising their plight, and therefore this scenario is now raising disquiet and concern among rural parents and educators. The rural population seems to have recognised their plight and they are now attempting to demand that something be done about it.

It should be pointed out that the issues involved here are deeply rooted in power relations. The notions embedded in power relations are sometimes opaque. They cannot be easily deciphered because, as Fairclough points out, they may appear normal and commonsense. This is apparently true with regard to the Ugandan situation in light of what is articulated in the national aims of education (Uganda

Government 1992: 8) and in the language policy in education (Uganda Government 1992: 19). But then analysing the situation brings to mind several questions, which include: how do we draw out and highlight the inequalities between the rural and urban areas? How do we study the inherent literacy practices in the rural and urban contexts? How do we start to unravel the power, ideological and attitudinal biases embedded in the rural and urban contexts? In a bid to answer these questions, and following recent studies on literacy, NLS will be supplemented by Critical Discourse Analysis (Gee, 1990; McGregor, 2004: 4; Street, 1996: 5, 2001: 13). This study realises that power relations are best analysed and understood when studied through the critical lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Critical Discourse Analysis analyses matters aligned with the dominant and marginalized discourses. Thus the current study adopts CDA as another framework to facilitate accessing the opaque implications of the various texts (Fairclough, 1995b, 2000; Wodak and Meyer, 2001).



I will use CDA to unravel the power, ideological and attitudinal biases behind the urban and rural parents' discourses. I also need CDA to analyse the interview data and to understand and underscore the intrinsic biases inherent in the texts, the language in education policy and the learners' results, which I intend to analyse. As Gee (1990), McGregor (2004) and Street (1996) point out, CDA is an important tool for highlighting the increasing disparity between the 'haves' (urban dwellers) and the 'have-nots' (rural dwellers). It is the conviction of this study that CDA is an appropriate framework for this work.

### **3.3: Critical Discourse Analysis**

Etymologically the word 'discourse' is derived from the Latin word *discurrere* which means 'to run to and fro' or from the nominalisation *discursus* which means 'running

apart' in the transferred sense of 'indulging in something', or 'giving information about something' (Vass, 1992: 7; Titscher et al, 2000: 25).

Hitherto, many scholars have attempted and defined the term 'discourse' in various ways and over the years the word has 'developed' and has been used in various forms depicting some form of interaction or 'learned discussion' and 'dialogue' (Maas, 1988). Foucault (1972) concedes that the term 'discourse' has fluctuating meaning and adds to its meanings thus:

... treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualisable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements (Foucault, 1972: 80).



Van Dijk (1977) offers a simpler definition of discourse when he refers to it as a 'text in context'. Here, I take a text to be either written or spoken. Any form of text occurs in a given setting. It is that setting that is referred to as the context and the context greatly impacts on the meaning of the given text (Kress and Hodge, 1977). For any text, meaning is derived from both the immediate context and the larger context. McGregor (2004) highlights this concept that "...our words should be seen as having meaning in a particular historical, social, cultural and political condition". He goes ahead and points out that in order to get the whole meaning, as both stated and implied, analysing any discourse should take into account both the immediate context (where and when the words are uttered/written) and the broader context (which exists in the mind and experience of the recipient).

This study takes a discourse to be a text, written or spoken, a word, a sentence, a paragraph or longer, that gives information to the reader or listener (Titscher et al,

2000: 25-6). The information given by texts in this study is of high value as it informs the study about the Ugandan society in general and the rural and urban communities in the Iganga district in particular. Thus, this study analyses various texts (the respondents' information, language policy in education and learners' results) to get to their meanings and to gain insight into people's attitudes, beliefs and ideologies (Chapters Five, Six and Seven have detailed discussions of these texts). Demirovic (1992: 38) and Titscher et al (2000: 145) highlight that kind of awareness as a type of meaning, which participants in dialogue processes give to particular signs. Bearing in mind Kress's (1993) observation that there is no arbitrariness of signs, and that *our words are never neutral* (an insightful statement Fiske (1994) uses as the title of his book), and in a bid to fully understand the gathered texts, this study finds critical discourse analysis (CDA) an invaluable tool for getting at meanings and gaining awareness into the people's attitudes, beliefs and ideologies from what is said and/or written.

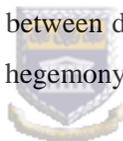


CDA is an approach to text analysis. It deals with studying and analysing both written and spoken texts. CDA focuses on inequality in society and the ways in which texts are used to realise power and ideology (Titscher et al, 2000; Fairclough, 1995b; 1993; Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Luke (1997) posits that CDA focuses on how social relations, identity, knowledge, and power are constructed through the written and spoken texts in communities, schools, the media and political arena. McGregor (2004) elaborates on this by stating that oppression, marginalisation and repression, go unchallenged if the text is not critically analysed to reveal the power relations and dominance. Atkins (2002: 1) further points out that CDA was developed to help analysts identify hidden socio-political inequalities that exist in society. The proponents of CDA believe that there exists in society socio-political control, which actively constructs society and that this should be exposed. A glimpse into the conditions of life in the rural and urban communities and a scrutiny of what goes on in the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district reveals enormous inequality.

Observations expose a wide disparity. As CDA is also an important tool used to highlight the increasing disparity between the 'haves' (urban dwellers) and the 'have-nots' (rural dwellers) makes CDA a very appropriate framework for this study.

Emphasising what other scholars have said, Fairclough (1995b: 132 -3) compounds most of these definitions when he articulates that CDA is the study of a systematic exploration of

...often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, texts, and (b) wider and social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (Fairclough, 1995b: 132-3; 1993).



He goes on to explain that CDA explores how these relationships are a factor in securing power and hegemony by drawing attention to power imbalances, social inequalities and non-democratic concerns, and other injustices in the hope of spurring people into action.

However, it is important to note that these power imbalances, social inequalities and non-democratic concerns, and other injustices are not always very obvious to both the recipient of the texts and the other people in society. They are hidden within the texts.

That is what Fairclough means by opacity, as he explains:

In referring to opacity, I am suggesting that the linkages between discourse, ideology and power may well be unclear to those involved, and more generally that our social practice is bound up with causes and effects which may not be well apparent (Fairclough, 1995b: 133).

Wodak and Meyer also point out that:

CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimised and so on by language use (or in discourse) (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 2).



The exposure of hidden meanings is important because it is through that exposure that the people involved, especially the victims, can be enlightened and consequently think of fighting injustices. This is possible because Stubbs (1980) points out that if people and things are repeatedly talked about in certain ways, then there is a good chance that this will affect how they are thought of (see also Atkins, 2002). As much as those in power might pretend not to see any problem, the victims will begin thinking seriously about the situations as they are highlighted and with time they will contest the inherent inequalities and injustices.

This gives credence and value to CDA because it conceptualises language as a form of social practice, and attempts to make human beings aware of the reciprocal influences of language and social structure of which they are normally unaware (Fairclough, 1989; Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 1989). This means that through analysing

texts from the CDA perspective all the hidden reflections about social injustices, power and ideology and their implications and influence are exposed to the so-far unsuspecting minds. On the other hand language can also be used by the interested and the affected parties to fight the existing inequalities and the injustice identified in their society. To this study, this is important because, hitherto, the language policy has not been held to scrutiny and therefore the implicit power relations it apportions has up to now gone unchallenged. In essence those notions have been opaque. By scrutinising this policy and relating it to the rural learners' poor results this study is raising the awareness of the so far unsuspecting minds.

Drawing on Bakhtin (1986) CDA views every instance of language use as ideological and linguistic signs as domains of class struggle. To this effect then ideologies are closely related to the practices deeply embedded in the social institutions, and are therefore, articulated through the discourse that is manifested in those institutions; thus discourse is understood as a type of social practice. Once this level is reached, pieces of discourse (such as those from the interview data which this study is about to analyse) are scrutinised more critically and by so doing the people's ideologies are accessed. Through this critical analysis the sordid truths hitherto hidden are grasped by the analytical minds and can now be shared, using less abstract terms, with other interested parties of the population involved.

When this is achieved CDA goes even further and endeavours to find ways of redressing the inequalities found in society (Fairclough, 2000; Martin, 2000: 275; Banda, 2003). It does this by enabling the critical eye of the analysts to 'see' and articulate those sordid truths embedded in the written and oral texts. The moment this is done the onus is on the stakeholders to rectify the situation. The process usually starts slowly, with a few people, but in time it is likely to yield results, as it will spur the disadvantaged groups into demanding and working hard to achieve the desired change.

From the CDA point of view, the situation is ironical. The irony here is that English is itself a tool of power over the same people agitating for it. In fact, it could be argued that the rural people are also embracing the dominant worldview (McGregor, 2004). Could it be argued that this is one way of fighting this kind of dominance in the belief that if their children gain entry into the language of the academic discourse they will also perform better and eventually access the realms that have been hitherto enjoyed by the urban population?

It is to this effect that Van Dijk (1993: 132) clearly stresses the basic importance of analysing texts using CDA when he observes that:

Though in different terms, and from different points of view, most of us deal with power, dominance, hegemony, inequality, and the discursive processes of their enactment, concealment, legitimatisation and reproduction. And many of us are interested in the subtle means by which text and talk manage the mind and manufacture consent on the one hand, and articulate and sustain resistance and challenge on the other (Van Dijk 1993: 132).

This implies then that CDA is not only concerned with analysing texts to investigate power relations, dominance and social biases therein, but also with how all these are initiated, maintained, reproduced and transformed within specified contexts. In addition, CDA endeavours to see to it that efforts are made to redress the situation. In essence, it highlights how various forces in society construct ideologies that favour and foster their interests. It does this, as McGregor (2004: 4) informs us, by making the discourse recipient aware that:

Discourse and language can be used to make unbalanced power relations and portrayals of social groups appear commonsense, normal and natural while in fact the reality is prejudice, injustice and inequalities.

This is not far-fetched in Uganda. To the less critical minds and the rural parents, it might seem just commonsense, normal and natural that, since the rural children do not know English they should automatically be taught in the L1s for their own good, and that once they are taught in their L1s they will definitely perform well, since they know their L1s very well. It could also seem normal, as the Government White Paper puts it, that the children in urban areas need to be taught in English because they have the capacity to learn quickly and enthusiastically when they are taught in English (Uganda Government, 1992: 16).

But McGregor goes on to explain that:



Using just words, those in power, or wishing to be so, can misdirect our concern for persistent larger systematic issues of class, gender, age, religion and culture (and make them) seem petty or nonexistent.

Then he warns that:

Unless we begin to debunk their words, we can be misled and duped into embracing the dominant worldview (ideology) at our expense and their gain.

It is imperative to debunk some salient utterances and/or policies like some of those in Uganda's Government White Paper. The consequence of this then should be that

the so-far marginalised groups take up arms and fight for what they think can liberate them.

In agreement with the proponents of CDA, Wodak (1996: 17-20) summarises the principles of CDA to include, inter alia, the following:

- CDA is concerned with social problems. It is not concerned with language or language use per se, but with the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures. Accordingly, CDA is essentially interdisciplinary.
  - Power relations have to do with discourse (Foucault 1990; Bourdieu 1987), and CDA studies both power in discourse and power over discourse.
- 
- Society and culture are dialectically related to discourse: society and culture are shaped by discourse, and at the same time constitute discourse. Every single instance of language use reproduces or transforms society, and culture including power relations.
  - Language use may be ideological. To determine this it is necessary to analyse texts to investigate their interpretation, reception and social effects.
  - Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory. Critical analysis implies a systematic methodology and a relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideology and power-relations.

Interpretations are always dynamic and open to new contexts and new information.

- Discourse forms a social behaviour. CDA is understood as a social scientific discipline, which makes its interests explicit and prefers to apply its discoveries to practical questions.

Synthesising the above dispositions, this study finds CDA fundamental and pertinent to elucidating the imbalance that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and urban learners in the Iganga district. Thus the study uses CDA to examine the epistemology and the biases underlying the attitudes and ideologies of the oral texts (from the interviews and focus group discussions) and the underlying truths and biases contained in the written texts: the government language policy in education, and the PLE examinations and term test scores. CDA greatly and aptly assists me, other researchers and analysts to understand not only respondents' attitudes and ideologies and the choices people make between English and the mother tongue, and between different literacy practices, but also the inherent socio-economic and education-related biases against the rural learners and rural dwellers in general.

Taking into account the Ugandan language policy in education CDA presents a viable mode for analysing the impact of the exposure to the medium of instruction and the language of education/examination and I use it as I endeavour to investigate other tangible causes of the existing gap between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements.

In part the language policy in education states that:

- (a) In rural areas the medium of instruction from P 1 to P 4 will be the relevant local languages; and from P 5 to P 8 English will be the medium of instruction.

- (b) In urban areas the medium of instruction will be English throughout the primary cycle.
- (c) English will be used as the medium of instruction from S 1 onwards (Uganda Government, 1992: 19-20).

This presents analysts with one group of primary school learners being categorised into two groups, one of rural and the other of urban learners. (It should be noted that, as stated elsewhere, according to the provisional results of the 2002 population and housing census 88 % of the Ugandan population live in rural areas and therefore, are the majority).

This, as this study will soon demonstrate, implies that the rural group ‘is condemned’ to using the relevant local language for the first four years of education (but which in reality goes far beyond that) while the urban group uses English. It is to be noted that P 8 has not yet come into existence. The Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), a national examination, is done at the end of P 7. Thus, (thanks to the policy and other reasons stated elsewhere) urban learners are exposed to the language of textbooks and examination/study as a medium of instruction for seven school years, in addition to using it at home, while their rural counterparts get only three years. At the end of the seven years the two groups do the same examinations, which are set in English. The learners’ achievements are then judged using the same marking guide. The intake to secondary schools is governed by the grades the candidates obtain in PLE with the highest grades going to the best schools. Once in secondary school, English is used as the only medium of instruction from Senior 1 onwards. And the ‘hegemony’ continues.

Having been enlightened by CDA, we recall that many scholars have underscored the importance of exposure to the language of study/examination. Those advocates

emphasise that the exposure to the language of the academic discourse gives learners the relevant language proficiency, which has a strong effect on their academic success ([NCCRD], 2000; Machet, 2001: 4; Barton, 1999; Saxena, 1994; Mcgroarty, 1996: 19).

The importance of exposure to the language of education and the views propounded by CDA give rise to very pertinent questions, such as: if these learners are all citizens of the same country, if they are going to do the same examinations, set in the same language, and be judged by the same yardstick and thereafter be subjected to placement in secondary schools according to their performance, why should not they be prepared for the examinations in the same way? Why should they be subjected to different conditions? Who stands to gain from such a policy, and for what purpose? How has such a policy helped to perpetuate hegemony? The list of the questions that come to mind is long.



Based on these brief highlights therefore, I adopt NLS supplemented by CDA as frameworks to investigate the impact of the literacy practices, the Ugandan language in education policy and the stakeholders' attitudes and ideologies on the learners' academic achievement. As mentioned elsewhere, I have particularly undertaken to use CDA in the belief that it can help me decipher and explain the respondents' views on the medium of instruction and the language in education policy and about their attitudes, values and ideologies about children's education. I use CDA in order to understand: the power relations inherent in the stakeholders' responses in the oral texts from the interviews and focus group discussions; the impetus that underlies the choices they make about language use, both at home and in school; and the subsequent future life they desire and anticipate for their children (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven). I use NLS to identify the literacy practices in which the learners are involved, and to evaluate the impact of those literacy practices on the acculturation processes they undergo. Furthermore, NLS facilitates an analysis of the impact of the

existing literacy practices on the academic performance of the learners in each context (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used for the current study. It describes the data-collecting instruments, the respondents, the schools and the homes visited during the data collection process. Following studies in New Literacy Studies (Baynham 2000, 2001; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Machet, 2001; Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000), this study employed an ethnographic design.

Creswell points out that ethnographic researchers study the meanings of behaviour, language, and interactions of a culture-sharing group (Creswell 1998: 58). In analysing literacy practices, this study focuses on learners' behaviour and language, and their interactions in their school and home culture-sharing groups on the one hand, and the rural and urban culture sharing groups on the other hand.

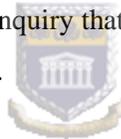
Based on the knowledge I gained through the literature review about similar studies, and as recommended for qualitative and ethnographic research, I decided to use semi-structured one-to-one interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, home visits and document analysis to scrutinise the cultures of the rural and urban learners both at home and in school. I chose these methods because they enable researchers (and indeed enabled me) to get to the respondents in their natural environment, which enables them to reveal their experiences in reality (Fouche & Delpont, 2002: 274-275; Creswell, 1998: 58-61). These methods also enable the researcher to obtain first-hand information and to delve as deeply as one can to find enough information for the study, through in-depth interaction between the researcher and the respondents.

This chapter gives a description of the research design and methods used in the study. It also describes the subjects, instruments and the general procedure that was followed as I explored the corollary of the literacy practices on learners' academic performance in both the rural and urban areas in the Iganga district in Uganda.

#### **4.2: Research design**

This study is qualitative in nature in that it explores an academic problem, which is imbued with social dimensions. Creswell defines qualitative research as:

...an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or humanistic problem (Creswell, 1998: 15).



Creswell goes on to say that in qualitative research:

The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998: 15).

In Uganda, the learners' academic achievements impact on their lives in and long after school, but various factors, including the settings in which these learners find themselves, affect these achievements. Probing into the nature of these settings could give us clues to understanding why certain categories of learners perform the way they do in their academic tasks. This was crucial for the current study, because to understand the kinds of literacy practices learners bring with them as they come to

school, one has to scrutinise the everyday literacies in the communities where the learners live, for a holistic picture. I endeavoured to meet the informants in their natural setting and to analyse the information they give in critical detail in order to access and understand the ideologies, values and attitudes they hold towards the education of primary school learners.

### **4.3: Sampling procedure**

Baumgartner & Strong (1998: 103) point out that the crucial factor in selecting a sample for any study is that the sample should be representative of the population. This study is based in the Iganga district in Uganda. This district is one of 56 districts in the country. The study tries to understand the intricacies of the discrepancies, which exist between the academic achievements of rural and urban learners. The selection of the district becomes representative in that all Uganda's districts have both rural and urban settings and all of them exhibit a similar pattern in which the urban learners outperform the rural learners in national examinations. Secondly, according to the 2002 census, the Iganga district has a population of 714,635 and ranks 10<sup>th</sup> of the 56 districts (Uganda Bureau of statistics, 2002). The same record states that 88% of Uganda's population lives in rural areas. Bearing all of this in mind, I chose to base my study in the Iganga district because it has a large population. The large population would help to underscore the magnitude of the problem, since it would show that the rural population, which performs badly in their academic tasks, are the majority and therefore constitute a sizable group of disadvantaged citizens. This dictates the need to find solutions that can help to rectify the situation.

My choice for this area (the Iganga district) was also influenced by the fact that I had carried out extensive research projects in literacy in that district before. I had worked with the education office and some of the head teachers on those projects. This was important because qualitative research demands that the researcher becomes immersed in the day-to-day lives and activities of the people in their ordinary setting

in order to discern the pervasive patterns of such life cycles (Creswell, 1998: 59-60). This means that one has to penetrate life past the gatekeepers to access as much information as possible. Working in this area was easier because I had long gone past most of the gatekeepers during my previous research activities. I needed to work in such an accessible area so that I could gather as much information as possible to help me decipher the respondents attitudes, beliefs and ideologies about the education of the learners involved in this study.

This section describes samples of the schools and the different categories of the respondents who took part in the study. Data was collected from ten schools, five of which were rural and five urban. I had one-to-one interviews with ten head teachers, twenty class teachers from the selected schools and four teacher trainers. Data was also collected from four focus groups of five parents each and eight focus groups of five learners each. In addition, I collected data through observing lessons in target classes and visiting six homes of parents. Three of these were rural homes and the other three were urban homes.



#### **4.3.1: The schools sample**

This study took place in five urban and five rural schools. I have referred to the urban schools as A, B, C, D and E, and the rural schools as F, G, H, I and J. I could have simply called these schools ‘high’ and ‘low performing’ schools, but I preferred to call them ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ to relate to their settings. The urban schools were located within the main urban area of the district. I refer to it as the main urban area because there are other smaller or semi-urban centres in the district. These schools were selected through purposive sampling, because they had performed best in PLE in 2001 and 2002 and their performance in the previous years had been equally good. In addition, they were in close proximity to each other. This was important as it helped to save time for travelling from one school to another. The urban schools had the

necessary infrastructure in place. They had lockable classrooms, which had furniture. The enrolment for the urban schools was not very high (see table 7.1). The learners sat comfortably and there was ample space for the teachers to move around in the class whenever they wanted to give individual attention to learners. They had a great amount of learning materials in the form of textbooks and charts, inter alia, and sufficient numbers of teachers. There were many literacy artefacts both in the classrooms and outside on notice boards.

At the time of this study there were over 200 rural schools in the Iganga district. Most of the rural schools performed poorly in PLE and the district examinations, which were done by the P 6 classes. The rural schools in this study were selected with the help of the district education officer. With the exception of school F they were partly selected because they were among those which had persistently performed poorly over the years (see also section 1.15), and partly because they were accessible within the poor infrastructure characteristic of the rural areas in Uganda. School F was included because it had for a long time performed poorly, but had begun improving in the recent past. This improvement could give me some ideas on what could be done by the other rural schools in order to improve the performance of their learners.

The rural schools had the classrooms, but most of them lacked doors, windows and sufficient furniture. They had large enrolments of learners due to UPE and the classrooms were always very full. Unlike in urban schools, there were hardly any literacy artefacts in or outside these classrooms, and the textbooks were very few, but were meant to be shared by all the learners. The teachers were fewer than those in the urban schools.

These schools were selected because a comparison of the learners' performance in the two settings (rural and urban) would clearly show the magnitude of the difference in achievements of the two sets of learners (see also tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 about the

performance in the two settings) and would highlight the different conditions as variables that could be influencing the performance in the different settings.

In each of the selected schools, the P 6 and the P 3 classes were chosen to participate in the study. P 6 was chosen because, according to the language in education policy (LEP), the learners were supposed to be using English as the MOI in all the schools, as they were being prepared for PLE, which they are required to write at the end of P 7. The P 6 participation would give a clear picture of learners who are almost set to compete in a national examination. Their participation would clearly highlight the disparity that exists between the rural and urban academic achievements. The fact that most of the rural schools use local languages as their MOI up to this level, while the urban schools use English right from P 1, would highlight the efficacy of the exposure to the language of the academic discourse as an important variable in the education process (see Machet, 2001).



P 3 was selected because the P 3 urban learners use English as the MOI, while the rural learners use the area language (or LI). It should be noted that whereas there are no textbooks published in Lusoga (the area language) in rural areas, the urban learners have a great number of books, published in English, to read. Moreover, even at this level, all of the learners do their examinations in English. The difference between the ways the learners are handled in each setting during their early years of education would bring out the rural/urban setting as a variable that affects education in Uganda. It would also highlight the prevalence of learning material in urban schools and the lack of them in the rural schools. The prevalence and lack of learning/teaching materials emerges as yet another variable that affects the learning process in the different settings.

#### **4.3.2: The head teachers**

These were all trained teachers heading the selected schools.. Six of them were graduate teachers and the other four were Grade Five teachers or Diploma holders. The graduate head teachers had been trained first as Grade Three teachers and then retrained to obtain diplomas, before they went for the Bachelor of Education degrees. All of them had more than ten years of experience as head teachers. I chose to seek information from the head teachers by virtue of their administrative and managerial roles. I hoped to gather useful information about the day-to-day running of the schools and I needed information about the resources and the facilities in the schools. I was convinced that the administrators of the schools were the most suitable people to give this kind of information.

#### **4.3.3: The teachers**

All the teachers interviewed in this study had been professionally trained. The P 6 teachers from schools D and E were graduates. The P 6 teachers from schools A, B, C and G were Grade Five teachers. The rest were Grade Three teachers. It should be noted that the Grade Three training is the lowest professional course for teachers in Uganda. Most of the trainees take it after completing four years of the secondary school (the ordinary level), but a few take it after six years of secondary education (after the advanced level). This two year course prepares teachers to handle any class in the primary school. Once in the field, they are expected to teach all subjects in the primary school curriculum. All the teachers interviewed had taught for over five years. I needed to talk to the teachers to get an in-depth in and out of class experience from their perspective, and information about the learners. These teachers are the ones who stay with the learners for long periods in school. The guiding assumption here was that the teachers would know their learners and would be in position to account for what goes on in their class and in the school in general.

There were many untrained teachers specifically in the rural areas but none of the untrained teachers was interviewed during the data collecting process.

#### **4.3.4: The teacher trainers**

The sample for this study included teacher trainers. There is only one teacher training college in the Iganga district. I held one-to-one interviews with four teacher trainers. The teacher trainers were randomly selected one from each department. At the time of this study there were four departments in the college: English, Mathematics, Science Education and Social Studies. All the teacher trainers interviewed were graduates and had been in this college for over seven years. I decided to interview the teacher trainers so that I could obtain information about the teacher trainees.

#### **4.3.5: The parents**

These constituted four focus groups of five parents each. Two groups were made up of parents from the rural areas and two from urban areas. The parents were selected with the help of the head teachers through purposive sampling. The head teachers selected those parents they knew would be representative of the whole parents' body and were articulate enough to give constructive information. They chose parents who were interested in the education of their children and who were conversant with what happened at school and yet also lived in the same the environment as the other parents they represented, and appreciated the community's problems (Strydom & Delpont, 2002: 334-335; Silverman, 2000: 104; Creswell, 1998: 111; Erlandson et al, 1993: 33). The essential factor here was to find parents with a wealth of experience and knowledge with regard to the education of their children. This I needed in order to be able to identify the home literacy practices, how they are instilled in the children and how they impact on the education processes of these primary school learners.

#### **4.3.6: The learners**

There were two types of learner participation that took place for this study. The first type of participation was through being members of the classes in which I observed lessons. The selected classes were P 6 and P 3. This was very useful to the study in that it enabled me to come to grips with classroom dynamics. Through it I managed to see the real life in-class experiences of the rural and urban learners.

The second category of learner participation constituted the eight focus groups with which I had very informative discussions. The focus groups were each composed of five learners, one group from each school from each target school. There were four groups of urban learners and four groups of rural learners. Two groups in each setting were from P 3 and the other two from P 6. The learners in each group were randomly selected from the target classes. In my view, learners in these classes were articulate and knowledgeable enough to give me the information I required. I needed these discussions so that I could access the experiences of the learners from their own perspective and could compare it to and authenticate the data I received from all the other respondents. It should be noted that all the participants in this study were very helpful and they gave me the information I sought very willingly.

#### **4.4: Data collection**

This section describes the data collecting procedure. As mentioned above, data was collected from ten schools, five of which were rural and five urban, in the Iganga district in Uganda. The process involved one-to-one interviews with ten head teachers, twenty class teachers from the selected schools and four teacher trainers. Data was also collected through four focus groups of five parents each and eight focus groups of five learners each. In addition, I observed lessons in target classes and visited six homes of parents. This was a bid to triangulate and thus validate the data in order to make this study more credible.

Unlike in scientific experimental and survey studies, where the methodological tools are prepared before going to the field, in the qualitative design, such as the one used in this study, the tools are worked out during the study to allow potential data supplementation and verification (Baumgartner& Strong, 1998: 176). Therefore I prepared the tools while in the field. In qualitative research the researchers want to listen to the participants and shape the questions as they explore the topics of study and thus they tend to ask open-ended questions. In so doing they refrain from assuming the role of the expert researcher armed with the ‘best’ questions. The questions asked in this type of research tend to change during the process of research to reflect an increased understanding of the problem (Creswell, 1998: 19). However, through piloting and refining, this study developed the following instruments, which were used to collect the data:

Interview guides for head teachers, teachers and teacher trainers.

Discussion guides for parent and learner focus group discussions.

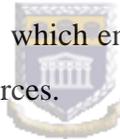
Observation guides for lesson observations and home visits.

It should be noted that these instruments were just guides. More and more questions were continually generated as they arose from the informants’ responses. What are presented in the appendix (A to G) are just samples of the stem questions.

Selecting method for gathering data is always based on the type of data needed for accomplishing a particular study. Greeff (2002) clearly states that the purpose of the research must guide the researcher to choose the most effective method. In view of that, this study required methods that would get to the people, as it was a social study. The problems I needed answers to were embedded in people’s social and cultural lives; thus I chose the methods typically used by qualitative researchers.

As already stated above, this study used semi-structured one-to-one interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, home visits and document analysis to scrutinise the cultures of the rural and urban learners both at home and in school. I wanted to identify the literacy practices that existed in the rural and urban settings and to investigate their impact on learners' achievements and on their later lives in society. Thus, I required methods that facilitate one to probe for as much information as deemed necessary and those I chose proved very useful (see appendix A-G for interview guides and the texts of information I obtained).

I started the interviews with the head teachers. These were followed by interviews with the teachers. During these sessions I would take time off to observe lessons in the target classes. That is to say, the interviews with the teachers ran concurrently with the classroom observations. These were followed by the interviews with the teacher trainers, then the focus groups with the parents, followed by those with the learners. I ended with the home visits, which enabled me to triangulate the data with what I had gathered from the other sources.



#### **4.4.1: Interviews**

According to Street, interviews are useful in research because they help the researcher to get to the respondents in their natural environment and capture their real experiences (Street, 2000, 2001). They also enable one to probe for as much information as considered to be useful to a study. In fact, a qualitative interview is an attempt to understand the world from the respondent's point of view, to get the meaning of people's experiences and to 'uncover' their lived world Greeff, (2002). Patton explains this more vividly:

We interview to find out those things we cannot observe...we cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviour that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot

observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people can organise the world. We have to ask people questions about these things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter other people's perspectives (Patton, 1990: 196).

This is done through the attention the interviewer gives to the moment and to the respondent's responses, in the form of words, intonation, actions, facial expressions and gestures. The purpose of my interviews was to elicit as much information as I could. I needed information that would enable me to fully understand the life of the learners both at school and at home. Thus, in order to enter the respondents' perspectives, so that I got their points of view and got to the meaning of the experiences that accounted for their actions, I held one-to-one interviews with three categories of respondents: the head teachers of the selected schools, the class teachers of the target classes and teacher trainers. All the interviews were conducted under very relaxed conditions and this enabled me to solicit as much information as I considered necessary. With permission from the respondents all the interviews were audio recorded. I also made field notes during all the interviews.

### **The interviews with head teachers**

These were the heads of the selected schools. I knew that they possessed a great deal of insightful information as they were in charge of all the activities that took place in the schools. All these interviews took place in the head teachers' offices and in a very relaxed atmosphere. I used the interview guide which I had prepared before going to the field to kick-start the interviews, but more question kept on being generated from the responses as I probed for additional useful information.

From the head teachers I wanted to get information about their own training that of the other staff members and how they thought teacher-training influenced the teachers' teaching abilities. From these head teachers I also sought data about how they rated their schools' performance in relation to the other schools both in the district and in the whole country. Mchet (2001: 6) points out that it is axiomatic that if one wishes children to learn to read fluently and to understand the role that literacy can play in their lives, that the materials with which they will learn these skills must be available. Thus, the availability or lack of materials is one variable that can enhance or impinge on the learning process. For that reason I needed information about the availability of learning materials, how the schools obtained them, whether they were enough, and how, in the head teachers' opinions, the availability or lack of these materials impacted on the learning processes of the children.

I asked the head teachers about the general background of their learners, the socio-economic status of the parents and the efficacy of the status on acculturation, scaffolding and mediation of the literacy practices and how all these variables affected the learners' academic performance at school. The head teachers gave me all the information I needed. All the information I sought helped me discern the disparity between the rural and the urban learners' academic performance (see appendix A for details).

### **The interviews with teachers**

A normal school day in Uganda starts at eight o'clock in the morning and ends at four o'clock in the afternoon. However, some schools begin as early as seven in the morning and go on as late as seven o'clock in the evening. During those eight or more hours the learners are in the teachers' charge. This means that the growing children spend most of their waking time during the week with the teachers. This means that the teachers are well positioned to know a good deal about the learners. In

addition, many of the teachers live in the same communities where the learners live and they socially interact with the parents. This means that these teachers possess a great deal of information concerning the learners with regard to both their lives at school and at home. To this study, this meant that the teachers had much to offer which would illuminate the kind of life the children lived and would provide important data for answering many of the questions this study is asking. It was for that reason that I had one-to-one interviews with the twenty teachers of the target classes in the selected schools.

The teachers chose the venues where they felt comfortable and where they could talk freely. The interviews were jovial, relaxed and the teachers were happy to be audio-recorded.

The interviews with the teachers enabled me to get their views with regard to schooled literacy practices, how the learners read, wrote, listened and spoke at school, both inside and outside the classrooms, and about the academic achievements of the learners in general. I also needed some information about the parents and about the children's homes in the rural and the urban communities, about the home literacies, how they were introduced, acculturated and mediated by the parents and how they were fostered in schools.

Furthermore, the teachers are the main implementers of the language in education policy (LEP), thus, through these interviews I wanted to obtain data that would help me construe the teachers' views and attitudes about the LEP and the ideologies that underlie the choices they make about the medium of instruction in their schools. I also needed to know how they related to the parents and the impact of their relationships on the education processes of the learners. Getting data from different sets of informants was imperative so that each source could complement the other and enable me compare the information from the different sources to strengthen the credibility of the information.

## **The interviews with teacher trainers**

As already mentioned above, there is only one teacher training college in the Iganga district. I held one-to-one interviews with four teacher trainers. All the teacher trainers interviewed were graduates and had been in this college for over seven years. Through the interviews with teacher trainers I sought information about the academic and social backgrounds of the teacher trainees and the kind of training they received from the college. I also needed to be informed on how the teacher trainers rated their trainees' performance as teachers in the field. These interviews were useful in that they enabled me to probe for the detailed information I thought would be useful to this study, and because the respondents were in their natural environment and I was able to capture their real life experiences. The teacher trainers chose the venues that suited them best and the interviews were conducted in a relaxed and friendly environment. The teacher trainers were very willing to give as much data as I required and willingly granted me permission to audio record the interview so that I could revisit the data during the analysis (see Appendix C for details).



### **4.4.2: Classroom observation**

Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that in the observation method the researcher watches, listens to and records events, behaviour, and phenomena of interest in the social settings chosen for the study. By observing the actual behaviour of individuals in the natural setting, one may gain a deeper and richer understanding of such behaviour (Strydom, 2001). In addition, observation avails one of a chance to see things as they are, thus making the researcher an eyewitness to an event. Seeking a deeper and richer understanding of what goes on in the rural and urban classroom was the motive for me to settle on observation as a means of collecting data for this study.

Thus, I collected additional data by observing lessons in the selected classes: P 3 and P 6. I selected P 3 because it was one of the classes which were supposed to use L1 in

the rural areas and L2 (English) in the urban areas, and because by P 3 the learners were already used to the school environment. I selected P 6 because by this time the P 6 learners were being prepared for PLE and according to the language in education policy they were all supposed to use English as the medium of instruction. It should be remembered that, in Uganda, all examinations are set in English. I was convinced that the learners in these classes were conversant enough with the in-class dynamics to give me the data I needed. These learners were also used to having observers in their classrooms as these classes were often used by college students/teacher trainees who were doing school practice and who were usually being observed by teacher trainers. This was important, as it meant that my presence in the classroom would not distract the learners much.

I observed lessons to scrutinise the kind of teaching that took place in both the rural and urban schools, to be informed about the teaching methodology used by the teachers, about the literacy practices in which the learners were involved while in class and the kinds of interaction that took place in class. Observation was important to this study because it enabled me to obtain first hand information on the events taking place in class. I observed three lessons in each of the target classes. A major aspect of this study is the schooled literacy practices in which the learners are involved. It was important that I saw exactly what happened in these classes in order to identify the schooled literacy practices to which the learners were exposed. I had to observe how the learners carried out reading, writing and discussions of their academic content, and whether, as Machet points out, they had the materials for reading and how they used them. I also wanted to see how they interacted with their teachers and their colleagues and the kind of atmosphere in which learning was taking place.

I made all possible efforts to ensure that during the lessons I listened very attentively to the teachers and at the same time observed the learners. This was possible by choosing a place from where I could see as much of what was happening as possible

without attracting much attention from the learners. I endeavoured to observe the learners as they did the exercises and looked at their books after the completion of the tasks. I also prepared an observation guide/protocol (Creswell 1998: 125-128) (see Appendix F) which enabled me to record as much information as I could. In addition, I made audio recordings of all the lessons I observed.

#### **4.4.3: Focus groups**

Focus groups are intended for the researcher to obtain insights into those groups' perceptions about specific matters (Baumgartner & Strong, 1998: 183). Carey (1994: 224) points out that focus groups could be meaningful if one wants to explore thoughts and feelings and not just behaviour. He goes ahead to say that things that are not likely to emerge in the one-to-one interview are more likely to come out in focus group discussions because group dynamics can be a catalytic factor in bringing information to the fore. The participants in the discussions can inform each other and this enriches the information the researcher gets. It was because of this that I held focus group discussions with parents and learners. I held the discussions with the parents first and then held them with the learners.

These discussions gave me an opportunity to probe for a great amount of information from the participants and in so doing went a long way in enriching this study. With the respondents permission I audio taped these discussions so that I would be able to cross check for facts during the data analysis and report writing procedures.

#### **Focus group discussions with parents**

As already stated I had four focus groups of five parents each. Two groups were made up of parents from the rural areas and two from the urban areas. The parents were selected with the help of the head teachers. Purposive sampling was used. The

head teachers selected those parents they knew could be representative of the whole parent body and were articulate enough to give constructive information. They chose parents who had children in the target classes. These were parents who were interested in the education of their children. They were conversant with what happened at school because they used to attend meetings when the school management called upon them. Some of them were keen on checking on their children's progress. These parents also lived in the same environment as the other parents whom they represented and knew exactly what was happening in the community. They were aware of the local problems faced by the people in their neighbourhood.

The basic point here was to find parents with a wealth of experience and knowledge with regard to the education of their children. The teachers and head teachers gave some information about what happened in the learners' homes and in the community. I needed to verify the data from them by comparing it with what I would get from the parents. I wanted to find out whether the urban and rural parents had similar or different ideologies and attitudes concerning their children's academic achievements in particular, and education in Uganda in general. From the parents I wanted to establish the literacy practices that existed in their homes and communities and about the parents' socio-economic status and how all these factors affected the children's education. I needed insight into the acculturation, scaffolding and mediation processes that took place in the homes in the rural and in the urban areas and how, from the parents' point of view, these processes impacted on the learning that took place in school.

The discussions took place in various schools. The participants were asked to choose the school where the discussions would take place. All the discussions were conducted amicably and the parents made invaluable contributions and suggested what they thought would help to narrow the gap that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and urban learners (see Appendix D for details).

### **Focus group discussions with learners**

Children and adults perceive the world differently. Thus far I had collected data from the adults' point of view and there was now a need to get into the respondents' world through the eyes of the children. For that reason I held eight focus group discussions with learners from both rural and urban areas. There were four focus groups of urban learners and four groups of rural learners. Two groups in each setting were from P 3 and the other two from P 6. Each group consisted of five learners, one from each school. I used several groups so that I could compare and enrich the data from each setting and from each age group. The learners in each group were randomly selected from the target classes. I did this in an effort to establish from the learners' point of view, the kinds of literacy practices in which they were involved, both in the home and in their schools and to obtain data about the acculturation processes undergone by the children.



It was important that the learners gave me data about the literacy practices in their homes and in their schools and how they were involved in these practices, so that I could compare it with the data from the other sources. I solicited information about the presence of reading materials, both in the rural and urban schools and in the homes, about the socio-economic issues in their homes, and about how, from the learners' perspective, all these issues impacted on their lives and on their academic achievements. The learners gave very insightful contributions which complemented the information I had received from the other respondents (see Appendix E for details).

As each group comprised of learners from different schools who had to come together to form the group, the discussions took place in various venues. I organised the venues with the help of various head teachers. My intention in meeting the learners away from their schools was to get them to open up freely. I assured them that the information they were to give me would be treated as confidential. This enabled the

learners to relax and they gave a great amount of information in greater detail than the teachers and parents had given me.

#### **4.4.4: Home visits**

Fouche & Delpont emphasise the importance of the researcher accessing the respondents in their natural environment. They say that this enables the respondents to reveal their experiences in reality (Fouche & Delpont, 2002: 274-275). Creswell clarifies this by adding that by looking at people in ordinary settings researchers attempt to discern patterns such as life cycles, events and cultural themes (Creswell, 1998: 59). This is very important because it enables the researcher to get first hand information and to probe for as much information as needed, and to gather as much data as required. It also helps the researcher access, through observation, other data which the respondents might not have thought important enough to be passed on to the researcher during the interviews and/or discussions.



Many researchers in literacy studies, including Sneddon (2000); Heath (1994); Gregory and Williams (2000); Blackledge (2000), have taken to visiting the homes of the children under study so that they can exactly see how those children relate to the literacy practices that surround them, and how the parents mediate those practices in order to make them useful in the development of the schooled literacy practices. Thus, taking my cue from such studies, I decided to visit three rural and three urban homes to make on-the-spot assessments of the literacy practices in the learners' homes and the acculturation process that learners underwent. I requested parents to allow me to visit their homes. I chose to visit the rich middleclass homes described in Chapter Seven and the poor, typical rural homes described in Chapter Six, for comparison purposes. Besides, the homes described in Chapter Seven reflect the type of home for which everybody would wish and would strive to have, other factors notwithstanding.

Six parents from the focus groups volunteered to be visited. I visited the homes to see what happens there and to compare it with the information obtained from the interviews and focus group discussions. I was particularly interested in finding out the kind of literacy practices in which the learners were involved at home, and how the parents initiated and scaffolded the literacy development process. I looked for and took note of the literacy artefacts that showed the children's involvement in literacy activities. I talked to the parents and the other adults and children I found there, and observed what transpired in those homes (see Appendix G for details). Throughout these activities I made field notes. The home visits were very informative and they helped me to triangulate my data, thus authenticating the study.

#### **4.4.5: Document analysis**

Baumgartner & Strong are of the view that data from documents offer insight and understanding into the 'official' of the agency or school or the kind of institution under study (Baumgartner & Strong, 1998: 183). This study agrees with such a position, hence I also analysed documents. My purpose for analysing these particular documents was to have official baseline data that would form the basis of the study. As most of the reports coming out every year indicate that the urban learners outperform the rural learners in national examinations, there was a need to have official records that would confirm the reports about the performance of the two groups of learners. It was for this reason that I analysed the 2001 and 2002 PLE results and the first and second end of term results for 2003 for the P 6 classes. These results provided this study with an overview of the academic performance of the target schools (see tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). I obtained these records from the district education office, but the same records were also available in the head teachers' offices.

Seeking to get a clear and informed picture of the levels of expression that underlies learners' performance in examinations, I analysed samples of the learner's written work (Appendix I). This was done in a bid to see how well the learners could express themselves in the language of academic discourse. This was important because learners have to be able to express themselves when they write examinations, and grades are awarded according to how well they can do it.

Machet and many other researchers discussed in Chapter Two stress the importance of the exposure to the language of the academic discourse in the learning process. Part of that exposure takes place in the school. The language in education policy (LEP) is the official document that guides language use in schools. Understanding the choices made by the teachers, and to a certain extent, those made by the parents necessitated that I analysed the language policy (Appendix H). In so doing I wanted to see how the LEP impacted on the acculturation, scaffolding and mediation of the literacy practices both at home and in schools and on the learners' academic achievements in general. The data from these documents enabled me to understand what was happening in the education sector in the Iganga district and to identify the biases and the ideologies inherent in these documents.

The table below shows a summary of the methods used, the informants, the processes and the topics about which data was collected for this study.

**Table 4.1: Summary of data collection methods used in this study**

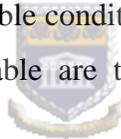
<b>METHOD</b>	<b>RESPONDENT</b>		<b>PROCESS</b>	<b>DATA COLLECTED ON</b>
Interviews	Teacher Trainers	Rural head teachers, class teachers,	Interviewed head teachers, teachers, and teacher trainers	-Available literacy practices -Impact of language policy -Ideologies -Learners' achievements -Medium of instruction -Availability of materials -The teacher training process -Teachers' abilities
		Urban head teachers, class teachers,		
Classroom observation	Rural teachers & learners		Observed what went on in urban and rural classrooms	-The literacy practices available -The cultural impact on interaction -The classroom environment
	Urban teachers & learners			
Focus group discussions	Rural parents		Held discussions with parents	-Available literacy practices -Impact of language policy -Ideologies -Learners' achievement -Medium of instruction -Availability of materials
	Urban parents			
	Rural learners		Held discussions with learners	-Literacy practices at home and at school -Attitudes to learning -Expectations -Cultural influence on education
	Urban learners			
Document Analysis	Language policy PLE Result for 2001 &2002 Samples of learners' work		Analysed documents using CDA	What those show about: -Medium of instruction -Literacy practices -The rural-urban divide
Visits	Family and community members		Observed and discussed the acculturation process, the available literacy practices and the parents' attitudes views, values, and ideologies	-Acculturation process -Literacy practices -Ideologies -Attitudes -Learners' achievements

## **4.5: Reliability and Validity**

Reliable and valid instruments bring forth creditworthy data. Reliability and validity give credence to the study. These two demonstrate objectivity and truthfulness of the research process (Baumgartner & Strong, 1998: 89). Reliability and validity increase the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of a study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; De Vos, 2002). This section describes how I tried to enhance the validity and reliability of the current study.

### **Reliability**

Reliability has been defined as the accuracy or precision of an instrument, the extent to which independent administration of the same instrument consistently yields the same or similar results under comparable conditions. Consequently, the more reliable the instrument is, the more dependable are the results (Delpont, 2002: 168-169; Bostwike & Kyte, 1981: 113-120).



Even though I knew that the instruments would continuously change once in the field, I prepared tentative observation, interview and discussion guiding schedules. I piloted them in four (two urban and two rural) schools, to ensure a reasonable level of reliability. This enabled me to review, rephrase, refine and enrich the basic questions. It also enabled me to foresee some of the other questions that I needed to formulate in order to obtain the desired data. These guides were used to kick-start and keep the process of each inquiry on track. This study essentially used unstructured instruments, which allowed extensive probing for the required information (Baumgartner & Strong, 1998: 182).

### **Validity**

Delpont (2002: 166) defines a valid instrument as one that does what it is intended to do. This means that an instrument should be able to solicit accurate answers to the questions the study seeks to answer, and/or elicit information that helps the researcher to comprehend the intricacies of the matters under investigation.

I ensured the validity of the instruments used and the data collected in this study through triangulation by using interview guides, classroom/lesson observation protocols, home visits and focus group discussions. De Vos points out that by measuring something in more than one way, researchers are more likely see all its aspects (De Vos, 2002: 341). The basic intention for the using a variety of instruments was that data from each instrument should enhance, corroborate, elaborate and illuminate data from the others sources so that the information elicited from all the instruments provide authentic data for the study.

This study further strengthened the validity of data through multiple informants: teachers, head teachers, teacher trainers, parents and learners (de Vos, 2002: 352; Baumgartner & Strong, 1998: 182). By comparing and contrasting the data from all these sources, I gained an in-depth understanding of the link between the literacy practices and the academic achievements of both the rural and the urban learners.

#### **4.6: Data analysis**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data and qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data which does not proceed in a linear fashion (De Vos, 2002: 339). She draws all this from Creswell (1998: 143-145) who describes the four stages used to analyse qualitative data. These four stages are discussed under the headings that follow.

#### **4.6.1: Data managing**

Creswell (1998) states that data management starts very early in the process of data collection. It entails organising the data into file folders, index cards or computer files. It also includes filling in some gaps within the already collected data. This includes completing sentences that were not completed during an interview and rephrasing questions where necessary. It is done regularly and continues throughout the process of data collection. It should be done as soon as possible when the researcher can still clearly visualise what happened in the field. In this study this stage also included transcribing the data from the audiotape, which was very useful in filling in gaps in the field notes, and in rephrasing, clarifying and enriching the questions.

#### **4.6.2: Reading and memoing**



This stage involves getting a feeling for the whole database (Fouche, 2002: 343). It entails making sense of the data by reading through it. One gets 'immersed' into the data by reading, reading and rereading the field notes and the transcripts and by doing minor editing. This enables the researcher to become familiar with the data in intimate ways. It is very helpful because, if done quite early, it helps the researcher to identify missing information that can be sought on the next visit to the field. In the process one writes memos in the margins of the field notes and the transcripts. Memos are short notes, ideas, or key concepts that occur as you read. They may reflect clues and tentative answers to the research questions. Reading through the data enabled me to identify gaps so that I could go back into the field to seek clarification.

#### **4.6.3: Describing, classifying and interpreting**

De Vos (2002: 344) points out that this is the heart of qualitative data analysis. At this point the researcher describes what has been observed in detail. Marshall and

Rossmann (1995: 114) add that this is the most difficult, complex, ambiguous, creative and enjoyable phase. According to De Vos:

The process involves noting regularities in the setting or the people chosen for the study. As categories of meaning emerge, the researcher searches for those that have internal convergence and external divergence...the categories should be internally consistent but distinct from one another... the researcher ...seeks to identify the salient grounded categories of meaning held by the participants in the setting (De Vos, 2002: 344).

As classification begins, the researcher develops categories of themes and sub themes. These are then given codes that are related to the data they represent and are understandable to the researcher. For example this study used 'TRS' as the code for the data from teachers. During this phase data is 'cleaned' and reduced to small manageable portions according to the identified themes

Interpretation refers to making sense of the data, gaining knowledge about, insight into and understanding of the data one has collected. Here the researcher engages in the critical act of scrutinising, challenging and deducing plausible explanations for the patterns that have emerged and for the linkages between them. At this level one also begins to analyse the data in relation to the research questions and objectives of the study.

#### **4.6.4: Representing and visualising**

This is the last phase of the analysis process and it involves presenting the data, packaged in table, text or figure forms. These are used while reporting the findings of the study.

This study like most studies embedded in NLS adopted and used these steps and thus categorised and did thematic/sub-thematic analyses of the qualitative data (Baynham, 2000; Banda, 2003; Saxena 1994; Martin-Jones & Bhatt 1998; Kenner 2000; Street 2001). The process ended in what is reported in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

#### **4.7: Ethics statement**

I obtained a letter of introduction from the Department of Linguistics of UWC. With this I sought permission from the District Education Officer, Iganga district, to carry out research in the district. I also obtained permission from all respondents to work with them and to tape the proceedings with the assurance that their identities and interests would be protected and that the information they gave me was to be treated with strict confidentiality. As for the children, I obtained permission from their parents and teachers, and the children themselves agreed to take part in the study. I also made clear to them that choosing not to participate would not mean failure in any examination or victimisation of any kind. Identities of the schools and homes were concealed through the use of letters such as A, B, C, for the schools, and numbers, 1, 2, 3, etc, for the homes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### THE ACADEMIC CLIMATE, THE LANGUAGE QUESTION, ATTITUDINAL AND IDEOLOGICAL MATTERS

##### 5.1: Introduction

To enable a comprehensive analysis of the rural and urban-based literacy practices, as well as facilitate a deeper appreciation of the status quo as depicted in Chapters Six and Seven, we first need to understand the academic climate and the language question in the face of globalisation that surround this study. In essence, we need to understand the social, attitudinal and ideological contexts of Uganda. This chapter presents and discusses the findings about the academic climate, the language question, the current mediums of instruction and the different stakeholders' views, attitudes and ideologies as a backdrop to understanding the differential effect of the rural and urban literacy practices on the initial literacy development of the learners to be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. This is in an effort to fulfil objectives four, five, six, seven and eight as stated in section 1.8.

This chapter has three sections. The first section contains document analyses. It clarifies the academic climate in Uganda through analysing samples of learners' work and PLE results for 2001 and 2002. This is intended to highlight the magnitude of the disparity between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements. The second section handles the theme of the language question in the face of globalisation in line with Uganda's language in education policy. The third section discusses the views, attitudes and ideologies held by the different stakeholders about the process of

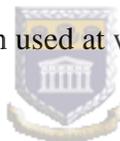
education. This chapter presents and discusses the findings about the language question and the stakeholders' ideologies together, in the belief that those ideologies have been greatly influenced by the language issue in the face of globalisation.

## **5.2: The academic climate**

The problem this study has investigated relates to the academic achievements of primary school learners in the Iganga district. Before delving into a discussion of the intricacies of language issues and the ideologies held by the different stakeholders about the education system, there is a need to illuminate the scenario as it is between the two groups of learners. As will be demonstrated shortly, the rural learners perform poorly while the urban learners perform well. When the urban learners perform well in primary schools, they join secondary schools that perform well and continue excelling up to university and eventually find well paying employment. On the other hand, the rural learners perform poorly, join the poor performing secondary schools, and as a result, never make it to the university. Either they drop out of the education system or join low cadre colleges and if lucky get poor paying jobs so that the vicious circle continues.

The problem rests in the fact that only a few of Uganda's primary schools perform well. All the respondents in this research conceded that less than ten schools performed well in the whole of the Iganga district, even though the district has over 250 primary schools. The rest of the schools perform poorly. The issue at stake here is that the learners' life roadmaps start being drawn from childhood. As will be seen in Chapters Six and Seven, it all begins from the home environment and their performance in school seals their fate.

Uganda's education system is examination oriented. The system strongly believes in examination scores and those scores reflect the school's image and the individual learner's capabilities. Thus, much effort is put in by the stakeholders to ensure that the scores are good, because all academic decisions are based on them. But, more often than not, the scores reflect the learners' general output, which relies greatly on how much they have mastered the syllabus content and how well they can express themselves as they write the examinations. The national PLE is set in English and all learners are required to do it in English. According to the syllabus, assessment of learners' examinations is done in such a way that factual recall (knowledge) is awarded 20% of the grade, understanding the facts and concepts (comprehension) 30%, the ability to apply the knowledge, skills and concepts in problem solving (application) 40%, and deductive and inductive reasoning 10% (National Curriculum Development Centre [NCDC], 2001: xiv). This applies to all learners who do PLE, regardless of where their schools are located. The same applies to all learners regardless of the medium of instruction used at whatever level in particular schools.



Bearing that in mind, it becomes apparent that explicating the intricate issues involved in all this entails analysing some documents. Thus, the decision to analyse samples of the learners' work, samples of PLE results and the language in education policy.

### **5.2.1: Document analyses**

A research process can implement several ways in order to access authentic data. Authentic data gives credibility to a study. One of way doing that is through document analysis. Baumgartner & Strong (1998: 183) are of the view that data from documents offer insight and understanding into the 'official' of the agency or school or the kind of institution under study. In the same vein, I felt that analysing some

documents would avail me concrete official baseline data for some of the facts that were to be discussed with regard to the disparity between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements.

As stated in Chapter Four, I chose to analyse the PLE results for 2001 and 2002 for the participating schools (see tables 5.1 and 5.2 below). In addition, I analysed the P 6 end of first and second term 2003 results (see tables 5.3 below). To give a clearer picture, samples of the learners' work were also analysed. A composition exercise was set for the P 6 class. The same topic was given to the rural and urban learners and their work was analysed as part of the data (see appendixes H and I for samples). It is my conviction that all these results connote the types of performance the two groups of learners put up both in daily life and during examinations. The comparison gives a clear picture of the difference that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and urban learners. The document analysis also includes the language in education policy. The policy is included in the belief that it influences some of the choices that contribute to the type of results learners in a particular setting get.

### **Samples of PLE results**

The Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) is a national examination, set and administered by the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB). This body is responsible for all the national examinations in Uganda. PLE is done after seven years of primary school education. It is the gateway into secondary school. The grade one obtains determines the type of school one goes to for secondary school education. Being the first national examination, it plays a crucial role in placement and to a great extent in etching out one's future. As stated earlier, selection for joining secondary school is done on merit. The good schools take the best performing students. Thus, if children do not perform well, they join poor performing secondary schools and chances that they will make it to university are reduced. This is even more so if their

parents are poor, because private university education is prohibitively expensive. As will be expounded in Chapters Six and Seven, some schools, specifically the urban schools, perform well while others, the rural schools, perform poorly. This means that children in the urban schools have greater chances of joining universities compared to the children who attend the rural schools. Many factors, such as those dealt with in Chapters Six and Seven are involved here.

Illustrating the differences between the rural and urban learners' performance can be done clearly by analysing the results of the national examinations. Seeking to shed light on this discrepancy, I analysed the PLE results for 2001 and 2002 for the participating schools. These results were accessed from the schools' records, which were kept by the head teachers. As a directive from the district education office, all schools are required to display charts showing the grades scored by the candidates in PLE in the past five years in the in the head teachers' offices. These results formed the basis for parts of the interviews with the educators. They illuminated many facts and gave insight to this study. The results of the urban schools A to E are shaded to highlight the difference (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below).

**Table 5.1 shows the PLE results for the schools in this study for 2001**

School And its enrolment	Grades					
	Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	Division 4	Ungraded	Failures
A = 55	32	23	0	0	0	0
B = 51	34	17	0	0	0	0
C = 19	13	5	1	0	0	0
D = 98	97	1	0	0	0	0
E = 112	101	10	1	0	0	0
F = 87	9	33	15	12	1	17
G = 111	0	0	52	34	3	22
H = 117	1	2	44	43	2	25
I = 105	0	0	54	34	0	17
J = 103	0	0	41	39	0	23

**Table 5.2 shows the PLE results for the schools in this study for 2002**

School	Grades					
	And its enrolment	Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	Division 4	Ungraded
A = 55	29	26	0	0	0	0
B = 52	44	8	0	0	0	0
C = 22	18	4	0	0	0	0
D = 128	125	3	0	0	0	0
E = 124	104	18	2	0	0	0
F = 94	22	38	28	4	0	2
G = 119	2	6	52	34	3	22
H = 125	1	5	37	65	0	17
I = 113	0	18	23	51	2	19
J = 119	0	13	21	51	7	27

There are a several things to be noted from these Tables. To begin with:

- Schools A, B and C have small numbers in their classes.
- Schools D and E have large numbers but the visits to the schools established that they have enough classrooms and other facilities such as textbooks, seats and desks for their learners (see Chapter Seven). Thus, they had two streams per class so that in 2001 each stream for school D had 49 and for school E had 56 learners. In 2002 school D had 64 and school E had 62 learners in each of their streams.
- Schools F, G, H, I and J have big numbers. All the learners have their lessons in one room with one teacher for all the lessons for the day.
- Candidates are recorded as ungraded when they, for one reason or another, miss a paper or papers in a set of exams.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show that the P 7 results for the years 2001 and 2002 have the same pattern as the P 6 results discussed below with the urban schools performing

very well, having almost all their candidates in grade one and two, and the rural schools, with the exception of school F performing poorly with most of their candidates in divisions 3, 4, ungraded and failures for the same reasons.

A comparison of the grades for 2001 and those for 2002 shows a remarkable positive change for school F. Another observation about the same school is that the enrolment is slightly less as compared to that of the other rural schools. Further probing revealed that this school had a 'new' head teacher who had ordered the school to begin at 7:00 am and end at 6:30 pm for P 4 to P 7 learners, and that the teachers of those classes were also expected to be in school from 7:30 am to start attending to the learners. The P 6 teacher put it in plain words that:

The headmaster arrives as early as 6:45 am and supervises the morning prep for those learners who are in school by that time before we get in to start teaching ... This was hard for us at the beginning but you cannot afford not to be in school at 7:30 when you know that your boss is here long before that, so we try and when we do not make it he usually understands... he does not blame you so much if you have a good reason... When the results showed some improvement we were excited and we decided to give it a trial... (Extract from field notes).

Inquiry about the enrolment revealed that the head teacher of school F tried to control the P 6 and P 7 enrolment to ease congestion. He was also putting up a two-classroom block, which, according to him, would enable the school to cope with the enrolment demands of the area. In addition, the head teacher divulged that the school's performance was improving because he had introduced 'tough measures about absenteeism'. He explained that:

... for example if any P 7 and P 6 learners miss school for two or more weeks consecutively with a reason other than serious sickness they pay some little money for remedial work before they are allowed in that

class ... Many parents, who usually prefer to keep their children from school so that they can help with domestic work, end up transferring their children to other schools ... but this has only affected those parents who are not really serious about the education of their children because it was a decision that was made in a general meeting with parents. They know that they are supposed to let the school know what is happening to their children if, for any reason, the children must stay away from school... (Extract from field notes).

From this head teacher's explanation, it can be deduced that determination and clear guidance has a role to play in improving the learners' performance. This also comes through from the remarks of the P 6 teacher quoted above. It tells us that the results of F began improving with the coming of the new head teacher who introduced new measures of starting the school early: creating more contact time between the teachers and the learners; strictly using English as MOI from P 4 to P 7; and reducing absenteeism. This implies that focused organisation, such as that exhibited by the 'new' head teacher, can be a factor that could account for the improved performance. It stretches into this head teacher's actions noted in his coming to school very early, thus leading by example. This also came out in the recommendations all the respondents made for head teachers. In their opinion, effective leadership could lead to improvement in the performance of the rural schools. The responses aligned to this scenario were articulated thus:

- The head teachers should reduce their own and the other teachers' absenteeism.
- The head teachers should monitor the teaching process more closely. This would help them appreciate the problems on the ground and make them seek ways of addressing them.
- They should also teach so that they can lead by example.

All this amounts to the views put forward by De Beer et al., (1998) about effective the management of any organisation. These scholars hold that focused effective management is a prerequisite for the success of any organisation and the school could be one example of an organisation where effective management plays an important role.

The case of school F, therefore, shows that there is a possibility that some of the underlying factors that seem to be contributing to the poor performance scenario could actually be alleviated (see Chapters Eight and Nine).

But as things stand at the moment, the PLE results above show that schools G, H, I and J, just like the P 6 learners to be discussed shortly, have very few, if any learners, in grade divisions one and two, and the majority of their learners are passing in divisions three and four, while a good number of them are failing completely. This implies that for most of the rural learners this level marks the end of education. The few who make it to the secondary school simply have to join those schools that can take such poor grades. Those are mainly the ones in the rural areas, which have the same problems as the rural primary schools discussed in Chapter Six. The results at the end of secondary school, in most cases, end up being equally poor. This renders the rural school leavers unable to get government sponsorship to university, because sponsorship is limited and it is awarded on merit to the best performing candidates. As the poor achievers are from the rural areas, if they are lucky they will join some colleges and get some skills, which might enable them get low-paying jobs. The less fortunate are likely to end at P 7 level and remain in the rural areas and continue living in the vicious circle of poverty.

### **Learners' work**

Appendix H shows samples of the rural learners' work, while Appendix I shows the urban learners' composition writing exercises. The learners were asked to write a composition about a very familiar topic: *The effects of HIV/AIDS on families in Uganda*. It is a topic that can easily be set for a composition writing examination. These learners have covered this topic intensively and extensively and almost all of them have experienced in real life. This is verified by the facts all the learners had about the topic. As stated above, the examination system in Uganda requires learners to express themselves clearly and cohesively, besides being factual.

The learners who wrote these compositions were just completing P 6. At this level, according to the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), the body that prepares the syllabi for schools in Uganda, the learners are expected to have developed narrative skills and to be able to write simple compositions and stories. The theme of the syllabus is effective communication in the English language (NCDC, 2002: 4).



A scrutiny of the learners' work brings out two positive facts. It shows that both categories of the learners have the facts about the set topic and that both groups of learners can actually correctly spell most of the vocabulary related to the topic in question.

However, we can also see that the urban learners have presented their facts articulately, cohesively and in essay form (as required). Their work is organised in paragraphs. The paragraphs contain points they have elaborated and some have given examples to illustrate their points. This shows that they have understood and internalised the facts and that they can use them to put forward an argument about the impact of HIV/AIDS on families. But from their samples, it is explicit that the rural learners have major problems. They have just listed the facts, and even then, some of

them have problems with punctuation (many of their sentences do not have full stops). They cannot explain, discuss and/or illustrate in coherent paragraphs the facts they have presented, like the urban learners can. In essence, this tells us that their discursive abilities are wanting. But the examiners marking the examination scripts are duty bound to use the same marking schemes, following the criteria given in the syllabus described above to grade all the candidates.

All the P 6 learners in the Iganga district do the same examinations at the end of each term. There are three terms in a year. Seeking to get a clearer and broader picture necessitated looking at the end of the first and second terms' P 6 examination results. The intention here was to find out whether the performance delivered by the learners in the exercise discussed above, was the norm. The end of term results would portray a clear picture of the learners' performance at this level. Results of only two terms were used here, because those of the third term were yet to be processed. It should be remembered that A, B, C, D and E are the urban schools while F, G, H, I and J are the rural schools. It is to be remembered also that this study worked with P 6 classes for the classroom observation and for the learners' focus groups and that by the third term the P 6 learners were being prepared for the Primary Leaving Examinations to be done the following year. This implies that by that time they would have already fallen into their schools' performance patterns. The results in table 5.3 were accessed from records in the district education office.

**Table 5.3 shows the end of first and second term results for 2003 for the P 6 classes used in this study**

School	No of learners	Grades											
		Division 1		Division 2		Division 3		Division 4		Ungraded		Failures	
		1 <sup>st</sup> T	2 <sup>nd</sup> T										
A	43	25	30	18	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	48	22	31	26	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C	30	16	22	14	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D	103	80	91	23	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E	122	62	96	60	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
F	92	15	27	56	55	10	8	9	2	0	0	2	0
G	87	0	2	0	4	41	50	31	21	3	0	12	10
H	95	0	0	0	5	44	47	19	23	0	0	32	20
I	107	0	0	0	0	23	62	41	18	5	3	38	24
J	120	0	0	0	0	28	60	38	31	11	7	43	22



From Table 5.3, it can be seen that just like in PLE the urban schools perform very well while the rural schools perform poorly. The P 6 classes for schools D and E had two streams and the results given in the table are for the two streams combined. While the urban schools have no candidates beyond division two, there are almost no learners getting division 1 and 2 for schools G, H, I and J. The grades in schools G, H, I and J are concentrated in division three and four and they even have failures. Schools I and J have those recorded as ‘ungraded’, meaning that they missed out some papers.

What comes through is that the performance pattern of urban schools outperforming the rural schools is set quite early. In fact, drawing from the findings of this study about the conditions that constitute the environment and about how mediation is done by the parents and the teachers in the two settings, as expounded in Chapters Six and Seven, it can be concluded that the performance pattern is set even before the children

get to P 6. This is in line with the studies embedded in NLS such as Banda (2003) and Machet (2001). These studies indicate that the conditions the learners find themselves in influence their academic achievements.

As will be demonstrated later, what we have here could be related to the exposure of the urban learners to the language of examination (LOE) and academic discourse, through the availability of reading materials and the mediation of parents and the devoted guidance from the teachers and other knowledgeable people with whom they may be staying. This puts the urban learners at a great advantage (see Chapter Seven). Research has it that exposure and practice (such as the urban learners get) enables children to acquire the academic literacy and literacy practices that equip them with, inter alia, the discursive skills, vocabulary, sentence structures and language in general which enable them to express themselves to the satisfaction of the examiners (McGroarty 1996; Crookes and Schmidt 1991; NCCRD 2000: 9; Machet 2001; Rothery and Martin 1980, 1981; Gee 1990; Baker 1994: 53 and Kelly 1989). As Christie rightly observes exposure equips the urban learners with the linguistic tool required by the rigours of the education system in Uganda (Christie, 2005). In essence, as it emerges in Chapter Seven, the urban learners benefit from the acquisition and use of literacy practices in English, which they get from extensive practice in the language both at school and at home.

On the other hand, the rural learners perform poorly. Based on the researches cited above, and as will be shown in Chapter Six, it can be argued that rural learners fall short because they have very limited exposure to the language of the academic discourse. It is also clear that as much as the rural learners have acquired some literacy practices in the language of the academic discourse, the quantity, quality and duration of exposure they have had has not brought them to the same linguistic level as their urban counterparts. Consequently, marked and graded against the same standards as the urban learners, the rural learners obtain very low grades as evident in the given results.

However, further scrutiny shows that school F does not perform as well as the urban schools or as poorly as the other rural schools. The P 6 teacher explained that:

Our school has, for a long time, been performing as poorly as the other rural schools but we got a new headmaster at the beginning of 2001. He came from a good school and he has introduced many changes. He insisted that P 4 to P 7 learners should be in school by 7:00 am and that we (teachers) should be there to help the learners as they revise their notes and also start teaching them early. He also told us to start using English as the MOI from P 4 to P 7. Now, we have started improving (Extract from field notes).

The fact that school F is improving implies that some of the underlying factors that seem to be contributing to this scenario can be mitigated. Other sections of this chapter will discuss some of them.



### **5.3: The Language question**

Language is an integral part of humanity. The fact that human beings have languages with which to communicate distinguishes the human race from other creatures (Afolayan, 1982: 174). This explains why all matters pertaining to language usually raise a lot of concern whenever they come under scrutiny. This is so because language plays many vital roles in society. Besides being used for self-expression in all forms of communication and to enhance the acquisition of knowledge and/or information, many studies posit that language depicts identity and culture (Robinson, 1994: 72; Ngugi, 1986: 16; Edwards, 1987: 9; Barton, 1994: 6). To this effect, Galda et al (2002: 19) posit that culture is much more than race and ethnicity. They explain that culture involves values, attitudes, customs, beliefs and ethics. They go further to say that we all come from a culture.

These observations imply that language tells what we are (Afolayan, 1982: 174). It follows that whatever affects our languages affects our core existence and that the language(s) we have at our disposal make us what we turn out to be in society. This means that while our L1s stand out to profess our roots and ethnic cultures with all their values, attitudes, customs, beliefs and ethics, we are at the same time caught in the academic culture depicted in the language(s) of academic discourse, which are also loaded with their own values, attitudes, customs, beliefs and ethics in as far as that academic culture is concerned. Inherent in this is the placement role of language. It turns out that this culture ends up greatly dictating our placement in society. The education one receives engraves the academic culture into that person's being. For many of us it turns out that the language of the academic discourse happens not to be our L1. This means that as we acquire and/or learn the language of academic discourse we acquire another culture along with it. This language ends up impacting our academic achievements and on our lives enormously.



Thus, the process of education demands that learners gain mastery of the language of the academic discourse. But, acquiring the language of the academic discourse is a painstaking process, especially for those learners for whom that language differs from the home language. Yet, that acquisition is imperative, because we are all aware that language is the most effective tool and basic resource in the learning process (Poynton 1990). While discussing matters about language and the learning process we need to remember that too little acquisition (of the language of the academic discourse) leads to too little mastery-in-practice and to too little learning; too little learning leads to too little analytic and reflective awareness and limits the capacity for certain sorts of critical reading and reflection (Gee 1996: 139). What these two scholars are articulating here is that the learners need a sound mastery in language because it is both a tool and a resource they badly need in the process of their education.

## **The language in education policy**

These salient observations made an analysis of the languages used in education and their impact on the learners' achievements imperative. This was specifically crucial in the light of Uganda's language in education policy (see section 1.4 for highlights). As mentioned in Chapter One, by the time of this study The Government White Paper 1992 was (and still is) the governing document directing the education process in Uganda. This document contains the Language in Education Policy (LEP).

The language in education policy runs from section 31 to section 37 of the Government White Paper (1992). (See Appendix J for the full text extract). While it is section 36 that gives the guidelines for language use in schools, it is worthwhile to briefly discuss the preceding sections as background in order to highlight the serious issues that accrue from this policy. This also helps to give a clear picture of the underlying power relations embedded in Uganda's language in education policy.

Section 31 states, in part, that:

Government fully agrees...that the diversity of local languages in Uganda makes it difficult for the country to achieve rapid universal and democratised education, literacy for all, and intellectualisation of all people as well as the attainment of the much needed national unity. Government has been fully aware that conflicting aims and prejudices resulting particularly from deficient views and outlooks to life as well as narrow and selfish interests, have made it difficult for the country to develop a common national language for Uganda... (p. 15).

This section as it stands, says that there is a desired will to achieve rapid universal and democratised education, literacy for all, and intellectualisation of all people as well as the attainment of the much-needed national unity. So far, the government is aware that there are conflicting aims and prejudices, narrow and selfish interests that have made it difficult for the country to develop a common national language for Uganda. This in itself portrays government as well intentioned but stuck in a dilemma because of the problems of conflicting aims, prejudices and narrow and selfish interests. The section, however, does not state whose conflicting aims these are, where the prejudices come from or lie nor who has the narrow and selfish interests.

But that aside, section 32 states, in part, that:

... Government, therefore, is strongly convinced that in order to develop a genuinely rich culture and to achieve national unity and rapid development, Uganda's language policy in education must be centred around the emphatic and deliberate development of a national and educational language policy that can contribute to the development of greater patriotism, nationalism and Pan-Africanism among the citizens, leading to the achievement of increased and beneficial communication and co-operation among various ethnic groups in the country, and beyond Uganda's borders. It would also facilitate the rapid achievement of permanent developmental and functional literacy and intellectualisation of all the people; an increased sense of African and international solidarity; the creation of integrated national and regional economic markets... (p. 16).

Together, these two sections (31 and 32) show the government's honourable concern for all the people, for their cultures, for national and educational development and for national unity and for unity beyond the Ugandan borders. They also show the government's concern for beneficial communication and co-operation among various ethnic groups in the country, and beyond Uganda's borders and for the rapid

achievement of permanent developmental and functional literacy and intellectualisation of all the people, an increased sense of African and international solidarity, the creation of integrated national and regional economic markets... Indeed, every peace loving patriotic citizen would surely love that. But pausing at this point begs the question: how is government going to achieve all that? Reading the policy thus far, one becomes eager to see the mechanism that is to be put in place for the achievement of those noble aspirations. Then, there comes section 33 stating that:

Government has considered, from a scientific point of view and with a flexible attitude, the traditional arguments concerning the ease with which children are supposed to learn in their mother tongues. Government regards the issue of language and educational instruction in a much more dynamic, realistic and progressive manner. It has noted the capacity of *many Uganda children –particularly in the growing **urban** centres where most of the good schools are located - to learn quickly and enthusiastically when they are taught in English,* (my emphasis) even if they learn it for the first time in schools; and that children at the most malleable stage of their childhood have the highest capacity and desire to learn new languages... (p. 16).

I have already voiced some of my opinions about that statement (See section 1.4 and 3.3). It may not be very obvious how that part of section 33 may lead to the unity being sought in the previous sections or how that part guards against sectarianism. And besides, it may not be unexpected to wonder whether English, which is a foreign language, for which the government seems to be advocating here would be the best means to bring about the desired unity in Uganda, as much as it could be argued that it could help to reduce ethnic linguistic prejudices.

Moreover, when the government notes the *capacity of many Uganda children – particularly in the growing **urban** centres where most of the good schools are located* (my emphasis) - to learn quickly and enthusiastically when they are taught in English,

we are faced with several questions, such as: what is government doing to intellectualise or even just help to improve the rural schools, which are by implication, being called ‘bad’? This becomes perturbing when we recall that records show that the biggest population (88%) lives in rural areas (Census 2002). Other questions that come to mind, at this stage, include: Does it mean that the rural learners are incapable of learning in English? Does it mean that the moment the rural learners use L1s from P 1 to P 4 they are going to improve? Uncertainty sets in. Kyeyune (2003) argues the use of L1 is not a magic wand that automatically makes rural children improve their grades. Another question here could be: is it only the urban children that have the ability to learn new languages even when they meet them in school for the first time? Evidently, the questions that arise from this section thus far are many. Another observation could be that the government seems to be creating divisions within the citizenry instead of the much-desired unity advocated for in the previous sections. It is apparent that there is going to emerge within the population the ‘English Ugandans’ in the urban areas and the ‘L1 Ugandans’ in rural areas, for example the ‘Lusoga Ugandans’ in the rural Iganga district (see also Krishnamurti, 1990). This means that, if the situation is not addressed, eventually Uganda will have two categories within her population. One category will be of those who grow up and live in urban areas using English and the other category will be of those who grow up and continue living in the rural areas speaking their area languages.

But the same section 33 continues that:

Government has also observed that in East Africa as well as elsewhere in Africa and in many parts of the world, countries that have adopted a clear-cut national language have achieved a high level of national unity, attained rapid high levels of literacy as well as socio-economic development, and maintained a reasonable measure of stability and peace (p.16).

Mention of this, definitely, reminds us of the language situation in Kenya and Tanzania. It is obvious that these two countries, sharing the east coast, the cradle of Kiswahili, have taken full advantage of it and have used it to foster their development in the education, political, social and economic sectors. The difference between these two countries and Uganda is that for them Kiswahili developed as a mixture of their indigenous languages and Arabic from the Arabs who settled along the coast – therefore, it is almost an indigenous language. For good reasons the coastal people embraced Kiswahili as it was part of them. It is natural to them. This is not the case with Uganda where Kiswahili is ‘foreign’, besides having a negative historic record and lacking literature. This partly explains why it has taken Kiswahili so long to take root in Uganda despite all the effort all governments; past and present have made to see it grow (Parry 2000). (No wonder there is a common joke that ‘Kiswahili was born in Tanzania, grew up in Kenya and died in Uganda’).

Section 34 then runs thus:



Government is determined to prevent the development of a national language policy that is based on, and is likely to promote in society the problems of, emotionalism, sectarianism, reactionary prejudice and inflexibility, and therefore likely to hinder progress... Government has been taking a broad-minded and development-oriented approach in considering the question of the national and educational language policy. The benefits of national unity, harmony and rapid socio-economic development in favour of the masses of people- these have been regarded as the most crucial guiding principles... (p. 16).

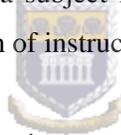
The section revives the question about implementation (see also Kasozi, 2000). One now reads on with anticipation to see the strategy which will ascertain the development of a national language policy that is not

...likely to promote in society the problems of, emotionalism, sectarianism, reactionary prejudice and inflexibility, and one that is not likely to hinder progress... and one that would bring about the of national unity, harmony and rapid socio-economic development in favour of the masses of people...

In an effort to ensure the realisation of the above, the Educational Policy Review Commission which prepared the report for the government before it was adopted as the Government White Paper, gives the guidelines to be followed in education in section 34. The commission recommends, inter alia, that:

The mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction in *all* [my emphasis] educational programmes up to P 4.

English should be taught as a subject from P 1. From P 5 onwards, English should be the medium of instruction.



From S 1 ...English should continue as the medium of instruction.

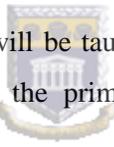
The teaching of Kiswahili should be strengthened at secondary level in order to prepare for the training of teachers of this language (p.16-17).

It is clear that these recommendations are less hegemonic, since they do not ascribe a particular language to a particular section of the population. Maybe if these recommendations were adopted as they are stated here, then the ground would be level for all the learners. But the government thought otherwise.

Section 35 gives an elaborate overview of the historical language situation in Uganda justifying the need to adopt and develop Kiswahili. The explanation is laudable for national, regional and international economic and communication purposes. Indeed Uganda needs to have such a language that can enhance its sense of belonging to the

wider world and bring about tangible development. What remains is for the government to find ways and means to entrench Kiswahili, which hitherto seems 'rejected' by the population, into the communication systems of the country.

However, when the government responds to the commission's suggestions made in section 34, it gives the following recommendations in section 36:

- In rural areas the medium of instruction from P.1 to P.4 will be the relevant local languages; and from P 5 to P 8 English will be the medium of instruction.
- In urban areas the medium of instruction will be English throughout the primary cycle.
- Kiswahili and English will be taught as compulsory subjects to all children throughout the primary cycle, in both rural and urban areas...
- The relevant area languages will also be taught as a subject in primary school; this applies to both rural and urban areas. However, students may not offer this subject for PLE examination...
- English will be the medium of instruction from senior one... [The first year of secondary school] onwards (Uganda Government, 1992: 19).

[At the time of this research none of the schools visited taught any Kiswahili and I learnt that very few schools, if any, taught it countrywide].

Evident here is that the government has disregarded the commission's more equitable recommendations. It has decided to have two different mediums of instruction for children growing up in the same country! It is at this point when more questions begin to emerge. Hitherto, we see a government systematically arguing for national unity in almost all sections. But at this moment we see that the same government, through its recommendations, is dividing the population, into two groups, the rural and the urban, beginning with young children by allocating each group different linguistic 'rights'. The urban can/should have English right away as they enter school, but the rural should continue with the 'relevant local languages' for another four years. The big question is: Why? Is it in a bid to achieve national unity? Or is it an effort to pave a way for unity beyond the Ugandan borders? In the first place, the government is aware that already there is a disparity between the rural and urban the learners' academic achievements. But, instead of seeking ways of bridging the gap it decides to promote the group that is already performing better than the other by endorsing that they should have more exposure to the language of the academic discourse. What is likely to become of the rural population who are denied the sufficient exposure to the language they are examined in?

Furthermore, the government also is aware of the role of languages in developing a 'rich national culture'. How is it going to develop a rich national culture when the children living in urban areas are having their education purely in English? Or what form of national culture is the government focusing on? After the government sanctioning the use of English from P 1, against the advice of the commission, can anyone blame the parents for speaking to their children using English at home? Being aware that many of the urban parents, especially the middleclass and fairly educated, use English when speaking to their children at home, and being aware of the role of one's language in the constructing and enhancing one's culture and identity, one needs to ask: what is going to happen to these urban children's cultures and their cultural identity? It should be recalled that other sections of this thesis have demonstrated that the urban children are the ones who are likely to excel in education

and get good jobs mainly found in the urban areas and therefore, they are likely to live there all their lives.

In section 34 Government professes its determination to prevent the development of a national language policy that that is based on, and which is likely to promote in society the problems of, emotionalism, sectarianism, reactionary prejudice and inflexibility, and therefore likely to hinder progress. But in section 36 it categorically allocates different languages for the different groups of learners. In the face of globalisation, the internationality of English and its inherent ability to reward those who master it with social and economic mobility, it is difficult to envisage how the government is going to exonerate itself of being sectarian and how it is going to prevent emotionalism with such a policy in place. Furthermore, in this information age, where a lot of knowledge has been packaged in English one would be interested in knowing how the government intends to ascertain that equitable intellectualisation of the entire population takes place at the same rate after the children are divided into two groups and are treated differently during their malleable formative years. A critical analysis of the language in education policy can raise many more questions than those that have been asked here.

The salient fact here is that by this policy, government dictates that different languages should be used in education by different categories of learners, at least during the first four years in primary school: English for the urban learners and area languages for the rural learners. An analysis of the language issues and how they impact on learners' achievements in view of such a policy calls to mind Gramsci's warning, which runs thus:

Since the process of formation, spread and development of a unified national language occurs through a whole complex of molecular processes, it helps to be aware of the entire process as a whole in order

to be able to intervene actively in it with the best possible results  
(Gramsci, 1985).

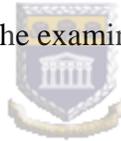
Such a warning needs to be heeded seriously because the language policy of any country tremendously influences the attitudes and values people place on particular languages in that country. The warning has also to be heeded because one must not forget that some languages denote more power and can construct hegemony more than others and that some languages have been marked to facilitate more economic and social mobility within the population than others (Phillipson, 2000: 90; Banda, 2003; Kwesiga, 1994; Holub, 1992: 140).

The assertion that a language can construct hegemony becomes very realistic and demands attention especially when the language policy seems to relegate specific languages to certain sections of the population. This could mean that such a policy helps to disseminate and entrench hegemony as the spread and development of that language policy takes place. This becomes even more critical when it becomes perceptible that hegemony is being entrenched in the children's lives right from primary school through the language in education policy. It becomes feasible then that some members of the population can observe the course of events or the entire process so that intervention might be possible when the need arises. This need is likely to arise when the affected parties become apprehensive.

As will be shown in this study, the hegemonic power of language is causing apprehension in Uganda. The fact that the language in education policy allocates different languages to different groups of the country's population makes it clearly divisive. From the CDA perspective, such an act is concomitant to making one group of learners more powerful than the other by empowering them through language. The group that uses the language of the academic discourse turns out to be better equipped for the examination system than the group that gets less exposure to the language of academic discourse. This could be interpreted as that the policy designates the latter

as second-class citizens since, in Leungh & Tosi's (1999) terms, they are getting second-class education.

This becomes more real to the people when the population realises how much power one of the ascribed languages wields over the economic and social mobility of individuals. This is easy to see especially where mastery in one of those languages seems to be more rewarding than mastery in the other ascribed languages. This is the case in Uganda. As Chapters Five, Six and Seven demonstrate, English, the language that has been endorsed for the urban learners is more rewarding in that fluency in it translates into success in school and access into the job market. Cognisance of this makes the population, especially those from the rural areas, apprehensive. This is so because they envisage that as long as their children do not get sufficient access to the language of the academic discourse, the language of power and the language that facilitates social and economic mobility, they will never be able to compete favourably with the urban children in the examination-oriented education system.



### **Views on the language in education policy (LEP)**

According to Uganda's language in education policy, government dictates that different languages should be used in education for different categories of learners, at least during the first four years in primary school. This is worrying because McGregor (2004: 4) teaches us that:

Discourse and language can be used to make unbalanced power relations and portrayals of social groups appear commonsense, normal and natural while in fact the reality is prejudice, injustice and inequalities.

Based on such counsel, it becomes imperative to question the hidden implication of the policy and to establish the possible impact it could have on learners' achievements, especially in the national examinations. This was so because at the end of seven years all the learners do the same examination, set in one language, English. As a result, the educators seemed most appropriate informants, but I sought views from the other respondents as well. This was in a bid to establish the impact of the language policy in education on the acculturation of literacy practices in rural and urban schools in Uganda and on the education process as a whole (see objective four in section 1.8).

### **The educators' views about LEP**

The general consensus among the educators was that in spite of all its good intentions, the policy is unfair and raises concern among practical educators especially those working in the rural areas. They said that they were aware that the children needed to develop their L1s for their cultural identity, but stressed that there was a need for the language of examination (LOE) to be introduced to the learners early enough, and argued that since the LOE is English, English should as far as possible also be the MOI.

### **Head teachers**

The views of the urban head teachers can be summed up in the words of the head teacher from school A:

... the policy is fine for the urban schools ... it simplifies the teachers' work since most of the children come to school when they already know the language ... we just fit in the subject content ... it suits the interests of the schools and the parents ...we need English as the MOI

because it is the LOE ... these children need to be taught to think and process information in English fairly early to reduce the time spent on translation across languages especially during terminal and national exams ... Having L1 as a subject in P 1 and P 2 could be okay as long as it does not consume a lot of time ... We do not teach it because it is not a priority to us ... We have children from all over Uganda and beyond, which L1 should we teach? Why teach that one particular language and not any other? (Extract from field notes).

The head teacher from school B dismissed the issue by simply saying:

If any parent wants their children to learn their L1 they can teach it to them at home. They do not have to wait for the teachers to do that ... (Extract from field notes).

Constructed from their responses the views of the rural schools' head teachers could run thus:



... it is okay to use L1 in P 1 and maybe even P 2 as the learners are being inducted in the education process and many are not conversant with English but the rural children also needed to start with LOE as the MOI quite early ... this would bring about unity and fair competition countrywide ... The four years of L1 are too long. ... The three years left for the learners to use English are too few to bring the rural learners at the same linguistic level for fair competition with their urban counterparts in the LOE. ... One wonders why there should be a difference in MOI for one group and not the other when all the children are Ugandan citizens and since they do the same papers, set in English at the end of the seven years of the primary cycle. ... (I) strongly believed that the disparity between MOI and LOE in our schools could be one of the major factors impacting on our learners' academic achievements. (Extract from field notes).

The head teacher from school J had this to say:

...What bothers me is the length of time, the four *formative years* (his emphasis) when most of the concepts are being introduced and thought is being developed. The four years are too many... at least one or two or a mixture of languages right from the start... (Extract from field notes).

### **The teachers' and teacher trainers**

The teachers and the teacher trainers' expressed views similar to the head teachers. But the P 6 teacher from school F had this to add:

... I strongly believe that the overuse of L1 is one of the major reasons for the poor performance in the rural schools ...that it also accounts for mal-examination practices whereby the teachers are caught assisting the learners as they try to read and explain the questions to the learners. This comes up when those teachers who happen to be invigilating the exams realise that the learners are unable to read and/or understand the exam questions and try to help and then get caught in the process. (Extract from field notes).

The P 6 teacher from school H observed that:

... the prolonged use of L1 over the four primary years and for most of us longer than that brings about a kind of ossification so that the learners and their teachers unconsciously 'reject' English. This is what makes some of us continue teaching in L1 up to P 6 and sometimes even up to P 7 in some schools to the peril of the learners' academic achievements. Even when we attempt to change in P 5 the process is

so slow that we cannot do much in the three years before the learners are required to seat for PLE ...The rural learners spend the P 5 year translating and/or relearning the concepts they have been learning and at same time going on with that year's work while their urban counterparts are progressing steadily. It is a tedious and trying year for them ... Many of them get challenged, discouraged and some give up and drop out of school... (Extract from field notes).

What comes from the educators' views is that there is a need for learners to develop the supportive literacy practices in the LOE early enough so that they can use them throughout the education process. The present LEP denies the rural learner this opportunity as it implies that they have to wait until their fifth year of education to begin intensive practice in the LOE. The educators argue that one or two, thirty or forty minute lessons a day or three times a week is not sufficient to make the learners internalise a language well enough to meet the rigorous demands of examination. The syllabus allocates P 1 to P 4 six-thirty minute language, literature and handwriting lessons and five, forty minutes language and literature lessons for P 5 to P 7. These are supposed to cater for all the language skills that must be taught including drama, and debate, story telling and writing among other things (NCDC 1999: xii).

### **Parents' views about LEP**

The parents concurred with the educators that even with its good intentions the policy is unfair specifically to the rural learners and advanced several explanations. Many of them were the same as those that had been given by the educators. But one parent from one of the urban focus group argued that:

...as long as academic achievement is the target then...the end justifies the means. Exams are set in English so the teaching should, as far as possible, be done in English. These are all Ugandan citizens and they

all take the same national exams set in one language. To be fair they should be all subjected to the same conditions... (Extract from field notes).

The views of the parents could be constructed thus:

...the three years the rural children have to use English as MOI are not enough to bring the rural learners to the same linguistic level as their urban counterparts or to enable them internalise LOE well enough to be able to competently and effectively express themselves and compete fairly with the urban learners. ... (we) are fully aware of the importance of L1 in the cultural and identity development but we choose to speak to our children in English to give them a head start in education because we know its value ... we know what it has done for us and what it can do for our children ... we know that our children need the L1s because many of them do not get it at home but at the moment we are focused on education we will work on the other things later ... the children need a 'solid' foundation in education if they are to cope with the rigours of this competitive world. (Extract from field notes made during focus group discussions).

On being informed that research has shown that teaching using L1 in the early years of education is very good as it enables the learners to develop the concepts clearly in mother tongue and that they can transfer those concepts easily to the L2, they vehemently disagreed and one parent said he had come across that argument but he was not convinced and went ahead to say:

... what puzzles me is what happens in real life ... why is it then that when it comes to exams, rural children who are taught using mother tongue for many, many years never beat the urban ones who are taught in English right from the pre-primary years. (Extract from field notes made during focus group discussions with urban parents).

The rural parents also negated that view. They argued saying that if that were the case, then it would be their children excelling but instead it is the urban children who do not get the concept in their mother tongue, that excel. They insisted that, since Uganda is one country and all the children are Ugandans, it was unfair for them to be subjected to different conditions and then to be expected to compete favourably in exams and the job market. They insisted that they would appreciate equal treatment. One visibly angry parent argued that:

... if any children needed to learn the mother tongue then it is the urban children who do not know their languages because most of them speak English even at home. Many of them do not know a thing about their culture. Our children know our language and a lot about our culture. At school they should be given what we cannot give them at home – the language of education, the language of power... The three years our children have to use English as MOI are not enough to bring them to the same linguistic level with their urban counterparts or to make them internalise it well enough to be able to express themselves and compete fairly with the urban learners. (Extract from field notes made during focus group discussions with rural parents).

All the groups of parents concluded that the only plausible explanation for such a policy could be the linguistic diversity found in the cosmopolitan urban schools, which necessitates a unifying language to be used as MOI so that all the learners can benefit equally.

### **The learners' views about LEP**

The learners who constituted the focus groups showed that they were aware of the necessity to embrace the powerful global literacies inherent in the English language. Those from the urban areas indicated that the LEP is not fair to the rural learners. And

they insisted that they did not want to be taught in Lusoga. One of the urban P 6 learners explained that:

... except maybe in P 1 the teachers can translate for those who may not understand English but not in upper classes because it would just waste our time and many of us do not know Lusoga ... I wonder what the teacher would do if ten children from different linguistic groups do not understand and yet the teacher does not know all their languages... (Extract from field notes made during focus group discussions with urban learners).

When I asked what their views would be if it was a language they all knew they still insisted on being taught in English saying “they wanted a language that would help them pass their examinations well”.



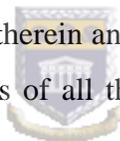
The rural learners shared their counterparts' views about the LEP. The discussions generated views similar to:

...it is okay to be taught through L1 especially in P 1 and P 2 because by the time we come to start school most of us do not know English and yet we want to understand what is taught... In upper classes we want to be taught in English because we have to do PLE exams in English... (Extract from field notes made during focus group discussions with rural learners).

One learner explained that he did not mind learning Lusoga as a subject because in the rural areas they have to speak to their relatives who do not know English but he hastened to add that the rural children do not have to study Lusoga because, according to him, they knew it already, they can and indeed, communicate using it both at school and at home.

In view of those responses, Gramsci's warning discussed above comes in handy. It becomes helpful that some members of society become aware of the implications of the entire process so that they can intervene actively in it. This could be by highlighting the subtle implications with the hope of getting the best possible results. Part of such results, in this case, could be sensitising the educators so that they try to change how they handle the rural learners.

One might also find Fairclough's theory on opacity very useful and applicable here (see Chapter Three). Embedded in CDA, Fairclough's theory on opacity alerts us to the fact that sometimes the connections between discourse, ideology and power may well be unclear to those involved, and more generally that our social practice is bound up with causes and effects which may not be well apparent (Fairclough, 1995b: 133). It could be the case in point that, hitherto, the connections between the discourse in the LEP, the power relations inherent therein and the learners' academic performance have been unclear and that the effects of all these on the social practices have not been apparent.



From the foregoing discussion, what comes to light is that, informed by CDA, one might not be completely wrong to point out that Uganda's language in education policy fosters dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language (Wodak and Meyer 2001: 2). If we bear in mind that McGregor (2004) warns that oppression, marginalisation and repression, go unchallenged if the text is not critically analysed to reveal the power relations and dominance therein embedded, the need to look at that policy through the CDA lenses becomes imperative.

By explicating the language in education policy as it has been done here, and by highlighting how that policy ends up influencing what goes on in the urban homes and in schools, the power relations and the hegemony so far propagated by the policy

have been laid bare. The intended consequence is that action could be taken by the stakeholders to ensure that the status quo changes in favour of the rural population.

What can be seen from all this is that, whether inadvertently or otherwise, the policy has so far been used to manufacture, enact, conceal, legitimatise and reproduce hegemony (Van Dijk, 1993: 132). It is also clear that the same policy has been used to articulate and sustain hegemony, on the one hand by favouring the urban population and on the other hand by ensuring that the rural population embrace it, thus far unquestioningly. It may not be very wrong to reflect that there is arising an awareness, among the educators and the rural population about the power inequality, dominance, and hegemony being propagated by the language in education policy (McGregor 2004: 4). And that now this awareness is giving rise to resistance and a challenge from the rural population. Thus, we can understand why the rural parents are demanding that their children be given access to English, the language of academic discourse, early enough to enable them compete favourably with their urban counterparts, and why they are calling upon the government to do more for the rural areas to ensure that intellectualisation takes place in the rural areas as fast as it is done in the urban areas (see their ideologies below).

### **Social placement in the face of globalisation**

That English is strongly viewed as and felt to be the 'genre of power' worldwide is an established fact (Fairclough, 2000; Banda, 2003: 27; Obanya, 1992; (Phillipson, 2000: 90; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999; Ridge, 2003). Even in Uganda English holds the same status (Kwesiga, 1994: 61; Parry, 2000: 62). Part of the power vested in the English language is in its ability to enable people to communicate globally and in facilitating social and economic mobility. This means that the lack of it implies that one's communication scope and social and economic mobility are limited. Consequently, intrinsic in the respondents' views about the language in education policy discussed above, is a general yearning for English in view of the

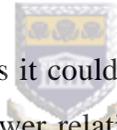
anticipated social and economic mobility attached to it. The immense amount of information and knowledge already packaged in English and the increasing globalisation are also intensifying the yearning for it.

Thus, the stakeholders in the education, specifically the parents and especially those from rural areas, are now bitter, and they are wondering to why their children cannot be given sufficient access to the language of the academic discourse and of power. (Many of the rural parents hold their own lack of the language of power responsible for their social and economic plight). They share the feelings of the parents of South African black and coloured children that ‘if you can speak it (the local language/mother tongue) why should you learn it’. And that if the exams and the textbooks are written in English why should their children be taught in Lusoga? They also feel that their children should learn something new and more ‘useful’ in the face of globalisation such as English (Slabbert and Finlayson, 1998: 4; Banda, 2000; De Klerk, 1996). And like the parents of ethnic minority children in Leungh & Tosi’s study, the rural parents in the Iganga district argue that their children are simply getting a ‘second-class’ education since they are being denied access to the genres of power (Leungh & Tosi, 1999; Crawford, 2003: 1). These views in a way justify the question which asks, what is the functional sense of starting literacy in the mother tongue, and then after three or four years starting literacy in another language, most likely never to return to the first language (Fishman 1989: 467; Banda 1996: 117)?

This shows that the rural parents in Uganda and the parents of South African black children feel that failing to get the language of education, of power and of the new world order limits their children so that they are confined to their local areas rendering them unable to be part of current wave of globalisation. In essence, what they are articulating is that, if the rural learners could access education they would be able to communicate globally. Their placement in society would be enhanced and they would have transcended their local boundaries. That achieved, they would

manage to gain access to the job market, and become part of the globalisation process, as they would be in a position to take up employment anywhere on the globe. Short of that they remain cocooned within their localities forever.

What comes out clearly from the foregoing discussion makes CDA pertinent here. This is so because the proponents of CDA believe that there exists in society socio-political control, which actively constructs society, and that it should be exposed. In this vein, Atkins (2002: 1) points out that CDA was developed to help analysts identify hidden socio-political inequalities that exist in society. Fairclough (1995b: 132-3; 1993) explains that CDA explores how the existing relationships are a factor in securing power and hegemony by drawing attention to power imbalances, social inequalities and non-democratic concerns, and other injustices in the hope of spurring people on to action.



Based on the views of the respondents it could be said that the people in the Iganga district are becoming aware of the power relations in the Ugandan society, and that they are now aware that the rural population is marginalised, first of all, by their economic status, secondly by their low levels of education and thirdly by the divisive language in education policy. Going by the tenets of CDA that power relations, dominance and social biases are always present in society, I find that intrinsic to the parents', especially the rural parents' responses is that they have now began to sense the domination that has been 'inflicted' on them by virtue of their location, level of education, economic status and, in Gramsci's view, by the powers of the state, or rather the powers of the dominant class operating a specific state (Holub 1992: 103) and in this case through the LEP. They are now aware that one way of escaping from their plight is by their children accessing education and being in a position to compete favourably with the urban children, and they acknowledge that getting access to the language of power, the language of academic discourse is one of the surest ways of doing that.

#### 5.4: The current mediums of instruction (MOI)

A medium of instruction (MOI) is the language used in the classroom. It is the language the teachers use while passing on the content to their learners. It is the language the learners are expected to use, both orally and in writing, as they communicate with their teachers. The previous section spelt out the government's expectations in as far as the MOI in Ugandan schools is concerned.

As will be demonstrated in Chapters Six and Seven, it is clear that the urban schools use English as MOI while rural schools use Lusoga as MOI almost all through primary education. In addition, the data shows that only one of the urban schools (school C) uses a bit of the area language in P 1 only. It should be remembered that all examinations in Uganda are set in and are supposed to be written in English only.

I sought to discover how much practice learners have in the mediums of instruction and in the language of examination (LOE). This was in the belief that sufficient practice in LOE would ease the learning process and also prepare the learners for examination. The findings from all the respondents, through observation in the classrooms and visits to the homes are shown in table 5.4 below.

**Table 5.4 shows the languages learners use with other learners outside class and at home**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Language used in school outside class</b>	<b>Language used at home</b>
P 3 urban	English	English and (rarely) a little L1
P 6 urban	English	English and (rarely) a little L1
P 3 rural	Lusoga	Lusoga

P 6 rural	Lusoga (School F - English only in the teachers' presence)	Lusoga
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Noteworthy is the fact that, as much as government has tried to promote Kiswahili, it is neither used in school nor at home in the Iganga district. And as will be demonstrated shortly, it is not completely wrong to say that all the learners have sufficient exposure to the ascribed MOI but that, while the urban learners have sufficient practice in LOE, the rural learner, with the exception of those in F, do not have any practice in LOE outside the classroom.

Further investigations were carried out to establish whether the learners interacted with their teachers outside the classes, and if so in what language and what topics they usually discussed. This was in a bid to discover how much exposure the learners had to models of the languages they used in the learning process and how much exposure they had to models in the language of examination (LOE). This was based on the fact that, since the learners spend long hours with the teachers, the teachers would be the most accessible models to the learners as far as both MOI and LOE were concerned. The findings are presented in table 5.5 below.

**Table 5.5 shows the Teacher-Learner interaction outside class**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Do you interact with teachers?</b>	<b>The language used</b>	<b>Topics discussed</b>
P 3 Urban	Yes	English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class work</li> <li>• Stories</li> <li>• TV programmes</li> <li>• Our future hopes</li> </ul>

P 3 rural	Yes	Lusoga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending them on errands</li> <li>• Greetings</li> </ul>
P 6 urban	Yes	English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class work</li> <li>• TV programmes</li> <li>• Future hopes</li> <li>• General topics about life</li> <li>• Sports.</li> <li>• Newspaper articles</li> <li>• “Anything else you like”</li> </ul>
P 6 rural	Yes	Most of the time Lusoga and rarely a bit of English School F - English with their teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending them on errands</li> <li>• Greetings</li> <li>• Sometimes about home</li> </ul>



Tables 5.4 and 5.5 show that in the urban areas learners use English dominantly both inside and outside the classroom with fellow learners and with their teachers, while in the rural areas learners use Lusoga, the L1 one of the area inside and outside the class with fellow learners and with their teachers. In both cases school F is different for the same reasons explained elsewhere in this chapter. This tells us that, in essence, the rural learners continue developing and polishing Lusoga linguistic and literacy practices and possibly the local literacies embedded in that language while the urban learners are developing and polishing English linguistic and literacy practices and the literacies embedded in English.

But even then, with the non-existence of L1 written literature (Banda 2000; Ikoja-Odongo 2003) the quantity and quality of literacy practices acquired and/or developed by the rural learners also becomes questionable. Thus, the rural learners have very limited exposure to and practice in the language of examination. In

addition it can be seen from table 5.5 that the models of language use the rural learners have available, expose them more to Lusoga than to the language of examination. This means that their exposure to models in the language of examination is also very limited. This spells peril for the rural learners because, as already stated in the previous chapters, the importance of exposure to the language of study/examinations as emphasised by ([NCCRD] 2000; Machet 2001: 4; Barton 1999; Saxena 1994; McGroarty 1996: 19) is not to be underestimated. Those scholars are of the view that the quantity and quality of exposure to the language of examinations influences learner performance. The exposure to the language of examinations that the urban learners in this case get, gives them the advantage, so that when the examinations come packaged in English, they excel while the lack of exposure curtails the rural learners' performance in those same examinations.

There is a vast body of research that advocates for the maximum use of L1s especially in education, and for many reasons (Ngugi 1986: 16; Phillipson 2000 Baker 1994; Cummins 2000) (see Chapter Two). But maybe to these advocates of first languages, especially to those who condemn the use of languages other than the L1 in education, excellence in examinations is not of serious consequence. It is true that local languages are loaded with cherished literacies such as those embedded in story telling and in the use of proverbs and riddles, which we need to preserve as the wealth of our cultures, but it is equally true that with the on-going process of globalisation and the onset of the information age, dependence mainly on the local literacies embedded in L1s is clearly not sufficient for survival. To be meaningful local literacies need to be supplemented with, or to incorporate aspects of, or developments in the more powerful global literacies. Moreover, Achebe (1962) has demonstrated that most of the local literacies, like those listed above, can be used effectively in English. In a competitive, examination oriented society, where the examinations that play an indisputable role of positioning individuals, are inclined towards the global literacies, reliance just on local literacies in our L1s could be envisaged as a hindrance to academic success, socio-economic mobility and to

accessing the echelons of power that go with that success. This came through in all the responses.

### **Respondents' views about MOI**

In view of the preceding arguments it becomes inevitable to try and find out what the respondents have to say about the current MOIs used in schools.

### **The educators' views**

As already mentioned, schools A, B, D and E use English from P 1 to P 7. The educators in these schools said they were very comfortable with it and gave the following reasons for their choice:

- 
- It is what the parents want.
  - It is the language of examination (LOE) and they want the learners to master it right from the start before they can face national exams.
  - It saves the time that would otherwise be spent translating the content across various languages.
  - It is the only way to make the learners access information from books.
  - The classes are made of learners from different linguistic backgrounds and thus, English unites them and makes teaching all of them easy.
  - That is what the language in education policy demands of them.

The educators from school C said they used English as MOI. It is what they used strictly from P 3 to P 7. They said they used a little L1 in P 1 and sometimes in P 2, “because some of our learners come to school when they do not understand English

very well, and yet we want them to learn just as well as those who do”. “In P 1 and 2 we have to keep on translating for those who seem to need it,” the P 3 teacher explained.

The teachers from school F said that for a long time they had used L1 in all classes. Two years ago they had got a new headmaster who had insisted that they should change and use English. Now they austere used English from P 3 onward. They said they were comfortable with this because their grades had begun to improve. “In P 3 I only translate if I sense that some of the learners have not understood me, but now most of them do,” the P 3 teacher explained.

The educators from schools G, H, I and J said that they used mainly Lusoga in all classed and “a bit of English in P 6”. It was in P 7 where they tried to use English seriously. They said they were not very comfortable with it because they saw the schools which used English performing well and they felt that their persistent use of L1 was greatly responsible for their poor performance “but our learners do not understand English, if you want them to get anything you have to teach in L1.”

The foregoing responses showed clearly that, if it were possible, all the educators (even those from the rural schools) would opt to use English as MOI.

Probing for the impetus behind this urge, specifically in the rural areas, established that:

- They preferred English because it was the language of examination. The teachers said that there was a need to introduce English as early as possible to enable the learners to cope with the demands of the examination standards.

They gave the following explanations:

- Teaching in L1 develops understanding of the concepts but the notes are written in English and the concepts have to be presented in English to the examiners. This gives the learners the cumbersome task of translating the concepts from L1 to English before writing the answers. This is very taxing to a learner's mind and in the process the learner may fail to present the concepts correctly.
- Much time is wasted in the process of translating the subject content from one language to another during revision and examinations. During the exams the learners will read the questions in English, translate them to L1, relate them to the concepts, work out what the questions require in L1 and translate it back to English before writing it down in English. It is a long and time-consuming process.
- The syllabus and the textbooks are written in English. (I did not see any Lusoga textbooks in any school.) Teaching in L1 means that the teacher has to do a lot of translation and may lose out some facts, in addition to wasting time in the process. This is an additional burden on the already stressed rural teachers.
- The structures of different languages differ. Internalising the structures of L1 often leads to direct translation of those structures into LOE. By so doing the learners get judged as incompetent and this affects the grades they are awarded during the marking of exams.
- Teaching in English equips the learners with LOE and enables them to revise notes, read textbooks, access information from other materials, read, understand and answer the examination questions as required. This would enable them pass their exams well.
- There is a lack of direct vocabulary equivalents for some words; for example, there are no Lusoga words for 'oxygen', 'carbon dioxide'

and ‘comma’ to name but a few. This makes the teachers use long, winding explanations to put across the content, involving those words. Short of that, they have to use the words in isolation, which adds to the confusion the learners must go through as they translate what they have learnt to and from different languages. In that process the learners end up spelling those words as they pronounce them using the spelling concepts of L1. The examiners get words like ‘karonidaiokisaidi, okisijeni, koma’ which are marked wrong and those candidates’ grades are lowered.

- The learners need to develop the supportive literacy practices in LOE early enough so that they can use them through the education system. Supportive practices, such as fast reading and writing, will enable them to gather a lot of knowledge about the content fast, and thus face the exams confidently, and pass them. This enhances their ego and motivates them to work even harder. Such hard work will lead to success. The reverse is likely to lead to failure or poor performance which will lead to frustration and eventually dropping out of school, because they have not passed to go to the next stage, or because they cannot take any more frustration.
- Knowing and speaking English in Uganda is prestigious and it instils great confidence and satisfaction in a person. The urban learners have this confidence instilled in them very early in life, and it is greatly boosted by the success they register as they pass their exams every year. At the end of the primary cycle they go to the good schools and their excellent academic achievements continue.
- The MOI has a great impact on the learners’ achievements, because it relays all the subject content to their minds and their academic achievement is judged by the quantity and quality of the content they understand, and are able to use to answer the examination questions,

and by how that content is presented. The MOI should, therefore be the same as the LOE.

- The MOI should equip learners with tools such as vocabulary, grammatical structures and literacy practices, which should enable them to prove that they have learnt what they have been taught. In the Ugandan education system, where competition begins early at PLE level, these tools are vital, because they are needed in the writing of examinations by which the learners' academic achievements are weighed. The underlying belief here is that if the MOI does not equip the learners with those vital tools then it curtails their performance.
- The MOI should enable learners to access information from all possible sources. If it does not, then, they might be under-informed. This implies that they will not have all the facts they need to compete with those who are using an enabling MOI ... (Extracts from field notes made during the interviews with the educators).

The single implicit cry in the arguments from all these respondents is that we all love our languages and that which is inherent in them. However, in a world where so much information has been packaged in a particular language, which is also the language of the academic discourse, of textbooks and of examination, and in the face of competition and globalisation, we need to enrich whatever local literacies are embedded in our L1s with aspects of, or developments in the more powerful global literacies. Consequently we will be empowering learners to belong to the global world. For this to happen learners need to master the language of the academic discourse so that they can excel in the examinations.

## Parents' views

First and foremost all the parents (both rural and urban) said that they preferred the medium of instruction to be English. The urban parents added that they wanted their children to be taught using a language they knew, the language of the examination, the language that would help them excel when they do the national examinations and the language that would enable them to access information and to belong to the global world. They explained that that was why they used English in their homes, especially when speaking with their children. They gave the following reasons for their decision:

- Because they wanted their children to get on well in school "...you see good/urban schools teach in English. If you are planning to take your child to such a school, then it is important that, by the time the child goes there, s/he can speak the language of the classroom if s/he is to understand what the teachers teach."
- These schools also have children from all over the country and they speak different languages, so for a child to get on well with the other children they need to know English". (See appendix D for details.)

One of the urban parents put it this way:

... I know what English has done for me. It has made me what I am today. If I did not know English I would not get the job I have (he is an accountant). I want it to do a lot more for my children. I struggled a great deal to learn it. I learnt it from school because my parents did not know it. I am ready to do whatever it takes to help my children to learn it. It has a lot to offer in terms of what one can become in society...

In as far as the MOI was concerned, all the urban parents emphasised that “there is no compromise on that” and one parent explicitly explained that:

...The children have to be very conversant with English in order to excel in these exams. Our children need to master English. They have to communicate beyond our own languages and beyond Lusoga, because you never know where they will live... the people they will meet... the kinds of jobs they will do... Many of us are not Basoga, but we are living here: how can we tell where our children will live... English will enable them to communicate in more than half of the world...

These parents argued that:

- Mastering English early in their lives gives the children confidence as they do their studies, because they can read textbooks, write their exercises correctly and see that they are progressing well.
- It gives them access to a great deal of knowledge and information because they can read other materials such as newspapers, notices, posters. The information and knowledge gained helps them consolidate what they learn in class, to build vocabulary, and to get used to spelling, tenses and structures. And all of this are very useful in their academic work (i.e. develops their literacy practices).
- When English is used as the MOI, these learners get the syllabus content in English directly; they are trained to think in English. This saves learning time, as they do not have to receive the content and think in the L1 first, and then translate it into English, before presenting it in exercises and exams. It is also important because some words and concepts, which are part of the content; do not have equivalents in most L1s. They gave words like ‘noun’ and ‘oxygen’ as examples, for which the teacher have to labour using long explanations to make children understand.

- It opens their future prospects. As they excel in primary school, their opportunities of pursuing further education in good secondary schools are higher and they are likely to excel and get good jobs and gain access to the higher rungs of society.

The rural parents indicated that they wanted their children to be taught in English, and if the mother tongue was to be used at all, then it should only be done

... in P 1 and then in English from P 2 or P 3, when they are used to school like in the urban areas ...but where the children seem not to understand then the teacher can explain in L1 just to clarify what is being taught.

All of them agreed that they wanted English very much, because the urban children who were taught in English passed their examinations at all levels. They added that they wanted their children to be able to express themselves in English to show that they have been to school.

These responses show that all the parents want their children to succeed in school and belong to the global world. They want them to be able to communicate with other people wherever they go, to have a communicative ability which transcends their ethnic boundaries and national borders. According to the rural parents, success in school will also give their children social and economic mobility, which the rural parents hope will 'liberate them from poverty'.

## Learners' views

All the learners (both rural and urban) said that they preferred the medium of instruction to be English, but the rural learners' sentiments about the MOI in P 1 and P 2 were rather different. The urban learners in the focus groups showed that they were aware of the necessity to embrace the powerful global literacies. They indicated that they did not want to be taught in Lusoga mainly for three reasons:

1. Many of them were not Basoga and they did not know Lusoga.
2. It is not examinable and would just waste their time.
3. They wanted a language that would help them pass their examinations well.

The rural learners had this to say:



...it is okay to be taught through MT especially in P 1 and P 2 because by the time we come to start school most of us don't know English and yet we want to understand what is taught... In upper classes we want to be taught in English, because we have to do PLE exams in English... You see if you know only Lusoga you cannot pass because you will not understand the questions and you will write broken English and you will be marked wrong and you fail...

They gave the following as other reasons for opting to be taught in English in upper classes:

- The exams are set in English and the learners are required to do them in English so they wanted to get the content in English.
- They want to have the language i.e. vocabulary and structure to use during exams and pass well so that they can go to good schools.

- The textbooks and the other books such as novels are written in English. They want to be able to read for themselves and understand what they read.
- They want to learn English and be able to speak it well with other people.
- They want to be in a position to compete for, and get the good jobs so that they can be comfortable in future.
- It is the only language used in secondary school and at university. They want to get there when they already know it well.
- They want to be ‘important’.

In so stating, the learners’ yearning for the academic and global literacies embedded in English is explicit. In fact, most of those reasons point at the competitiveness of life in the society they are living in. These reasons show that the children are aware that they have to do well in school before they gain access to socio-economic mobility and to echelons of power and to belong to the wider communication circles.

### **5.5: The stakeholders’ attitudes, values and ideology**

It is important to note right from the start that it is difficult to draw clear-cut lines and define the terms ‘attitudes’, ‘values’ and ‘’ separately without one word running into the other(s). Attitudes can simply be defined as the way we feel about something. But McGroarty (1996: 5) informs us that attitude is linked to a person’s values and beliefs and promotes or discourages the choices made in the realms of activity, whether academic or informal. In this study, the word ‘values’ has been taken to mean the things we treasure highly and hold as dear, as well as the importance we accord them. ‘Ideology’ is one of those words with a wide range of meanings, depending on the context in which they are used. However, it has been used here to refer to a body of ideas reflecting the needs and aspirations of a particular individual, group, class, or

culture (Shoup, 2000). Ideology can also be taken to refer to a set of beliefs and ideas that justify certain interests (Phillips 1996) or it could just simply mean ‘a system of ideas and beliefs’. This means that our beliefs underlie our attitudes and values, and that the three, beliefs, values and attitudes are the basis of the ideologies we hold about various matters. This section discusses the respondents’ attitudes, values and ideologies about the rural-urban divide, literacy practices and learners’ academic performance. Thus it deals with seventh objective of this study (see section 1.8).

It is important to note that all the respondents acknowledged that the rural-urban divide existed, that there was an imbalance between the rural and urban learners’ achievements and that the literacy practices in the two settings differed both in quality and quantity. All the respondents conceded that the rural-urban divide was worrying and not good for the country. All of them were of the view that it needed to be addressed so that the gap between the two groups of learners was narrowed. They recommended that the stakeholders, especially those in rural areas, needed to be educated on how they could set in place literacy practices that could help the children to improve in school.

### **The educators**

As indicated elsewhere, the head teachers, teachers and teacher trainers constituted the group of educators. Their views, attitudes and ideologies about education in Uganda in general and about the rural-urban divide in particular were accessed through interviews.

### **The urban educators**

The views and attitudes we hold about various matters and the situation in which we find ourselves tend to influence our actions. In most cases, we strive to ensure that we achieve our goals. In Uganda, good performance is an ultimate goal in education for

all stakeholders and everyone strives for it. It should be noted from the onset that all educators expressed positive attitudes and ideologies about the learners' academic performance. The difference between the rural and the urban educators' views, values, attitudes and ideologies stems from the environment in which each group finds themselves. The prevailing conditions in each setting influence the efforts each category invests in the education of their learners. Unfortunately, many factors discussed in this study tend to militate against the rural educators, rendering them unable to attain their goals.

As will be shown in Chapters Six and Seven, all of them valued good grades. All head teachers would like their learners to perform excellently in the national examinations. Excellent scores are valued, especially because they reflect well on the school's name and the head teachers receive the credit. The head teachers of the schools that perform well are held in high esteem and are respected by society. I discovered that the urban head teachers had very positive views and attitudes towards their learners' academic performance. All of them said that they were ready to do whatever they could to ensure that 'work is done and it is done well by whoever is involved, the teachers, cooks or cleaners...' as one of them emphasised.

The urban head teachers held the following, inter alia, as their ideologies, which, to them, contributed to their learners' academic achievements:

- Discipline is a must both at home and at school.
- Much practice in the form of exercises is vital. Learners should avoid being idle. Practice makes perfect.
- Nothing is for free: the learners must work hard to excel in national examinations and the other stakeholders must also play their parts diligently.

- There must be a wide range of teaching/learning materials to be used in the delivery of the content to enable the learners grasp the gist of what is being taught.
- Good grades are important right from the start, because they instil confidence and satisfy the ego of the learners, making them to work even harder.
- The learners need a comfortable physical, social and emotional environment for much learning to take place. The more learning takes place the better the academic achievement.
- MOI is very important. Where possible, it should be the same as the LOE. It is important that the LOE is mastered. Exposure to the LOE is paramount.
- Excelling in school is a prerequisite to social and economic mobility.
- Competition is healthy. (The urban schools are always competing with each other in performance).



The urban teachers indicated that they valued good grades and would like their learners to perform excellently in the national examinations. They said that when the students passed they felt that their time and efforts had been well spent. The urban teachers expressed very positive attitudes. The teachers exhibited high esteem, commitment and diligence which attested to their positive attitudes ensuing from good performance. I could see how committed they were to their work through the way they attended to the learners during the classroom observation. They went about their work with a lot of enthusiasm.

The urban teachers' ideologies included the following:

- All stakeholders must play their roles, such as parents providing the required scholastic materials and all teachers teaching diligently.
- Motivated and worry-free teachers give better service.
- Hungry teachers cannot teach well and hungry learners cannot learn much.
- MOI should be the same as LOE.
- The socio-economic status of people greatly affects their lives. Everybody should try to improve his or her socio-economic status.
- Good facilities ease the teaching and learning processes.
- Over-populated classes are difficult to manage.
- The teachers' welfare affects what goes on in the school.
- Learners' exposure to LOE and sources of information such as books and the mass media is important in the learning process.

It would not be exaggerating to observe that this set of the positive attitudes and values, which is inherent in these educators' ideologies, amounts to both focus and determination on the part of the schools that benefit from them. With such focus and determination success comes much easier in an endeavour. These ideologies go a

long way in explaining the good results obtained by the urban schools, as shown in tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 above.

### **The rural educators**

As implied above, the rural head teachers also said that they would like their learners to perform excellently in the national examinations. They indicated that they valued good grades, even though their learners never got them. They also had positive attitudes and many said that they were willing to try harder to make sure their schools' performance improved. However, some of them said that they had been disappointed by the persistent poor results. Two of them actually sounded complacent. One of these two articulated it thus:

We try but whatever you do, it never seems good enough to improve the learners' grades ... You try this, this and that, but nothing comes out of all your effort and you sort of give up...sometimes you look at a situation and really see that there is nothing much you can do to help it...take for example the orphans ... they are so many and most of them come with nothing ...how can you help them ... and the parents are so poor ... You ask the parents to buy exercise books even when you can see that they can hardly feed their families... (Extract from field notes).

The rural head teachers blamed it on the lack of facilities and books and the prevailing poverty among parents. But still they provided the following as their ideologies about the learners' academic achievement:

- The learners need to master the LOE and it should be the same as the MOI. They need to be exposed to it early.

- Children should pass exams because success in school is the only key to social and economic mobility that can alleviate the widespread poverty rampant in the rural areas.
- Lack of sufficient learning/teaching materials renders teaching and learning almost impossible. Government needs to do more than it is doing now for the rural areas. For example it should make available more teaching and learning materials, post there trained teachers and pay them well so that they can work hard.
- Policies, like the LEP, should be flexible, realistic and equitable to everybody.
- Academic achievements should instil and develop self-sustaining skills.
- Improving learners' academic achievement is possible if all the stakeholders who include parents, teachers, the government and learners, cooperate. Everybody needs to be responsible and play their parts diligently



Like their head teachers, the rural teachers also said that they would like their learners to perform well in the national examinations. They portrayed positive attitudes and said they were willing to do whatever they could, in the prevailing circumstances, to make sure that their schools' performance improved. But they said that the persistent poor results kept on frustrating them. Some of them conceded that they had been disappointed and had become 'a bit complacent'. The P 6 teacher from school I put it this way:

You keep trying but you never see any improvement. Every year things seem to be just getting worse... the learners have no books...the classes are so big...class control becomes a problem...the textbooks

are so few... it is frustrating you just do not feel like trying any more...(Extract from field notes).

The rural teachers advanced the following as their ideologies:

- Poverty is the biggest cause of the problems in the rural areas.
- Commitment can help. The parents and the teachers need to play their roles effectively, such as the parents providing scholastic materials, time and facilities for their children and the teachers helping the learners with academic work.

### **The teacher trainers**

From the teacher trainers I established that they valued education highly. They indicated that if it were possible, everybody, especially the children growing up in Uganda now, would get substantial education. This implies positive attitudes towards education.

As for their ideologies, teacher trainers articulated the following:

- The teachers' welfare matters a great deal because it affects their work.
- Hard work pays. Success has to be worked for.
- The lack of role models makes the rural learners lack focus and inspiration.
- Hungry teachers cannot teach well and hungry learners cannot learn.

- Time is a great asset especially if it is used well. (To them, the urban schools do well because the teachers stay longer in schools and they use their time well).
- Education is an investment: what you get from it depends on what you put in.
- The facilities, such as enough room, textbooks and other reading materials, which a school has in place, play a critical role in the learning process.
- The socio-economic status and the education level of parents affect the children's learning process.

Two things can be noted from all the educators. First of all is the fact that all of them value academic success regardless of whether they get it or not. Secondly we can decipher the difference between the rural and the urban respondents. The situation at hand is that of a well focused, determined, enthusiastic and diligent group on the one hand; and that of a less ambitious, frustrated and almost complacent group, a group that has almost surrendered to fate, on the other hand. This kind of scenario seems to be rooted in the differential conditions found in each setting (see Chapters Six and Seven). In essence, the values and attitudes each group has towards the learners' academic achievements and the condition each group finds itself into seems to be dictating the ideologies they hold.

One also notes that the values, attitudes and ideologies held by these respondents are not very different. The very salient ones that cut across all groups are focused towards the teachers' welfare, the children's welfare, the need for hard work, the impact of the socio-economic status and the importance of facilities and instructional materials. All the educators in this study believed that those factors had great bearing on what

happened in the school, and that what happened in the school had a great influence on the learners' achievements.

### **The Parents**

The ideal situation dictates that parents play a major role in the education of their children. This is imperative because, as will be demonstrated, what happens in the home greatly influences what happens in school. Normally, the more involved the parents are in their children's education, the better the children's grades are. As already indicated in the earlier sections of this chapter and elsewhere, all the parents valued their children's education highly. But the urban parents came out strongly and indicated that to them, "there is no compromise". The urban parents were ready to do (and indeed did) whatever it took to make sure that their children received the best education, trusting that it would ensure that they succeeded in life (see Chapter Seven). All the parents portrayed very positive attitudes as they indicated that they would do anything they could to keep their children in school. One urban parent summed up the urban parents' attitudes and views in these words:

Education is invaluable. It is the only investment that one can give children and be almost certain that children will be able to face life and support themselves long after you are dead. If you try to imagine what you would be without education, you would not like your children to be that...

The urban parents stated the following ideologies:

- Education is very important and it is not negotiable.
- A child's learning takes place both at school and at home.

- The teachers' welfare is important if the teachers are to do a good job.
- Big classes make the teachers' work difficult.
- The facilities in the school impact on the learning and the teaching processes that take place in the school.
- It is difficult for teachers to teach and children to learn when they are hungry.

The rural parents sounded desperate about their children's education. To most of them, their children's success in education was the only lifeline out of the pangs of poverty they were living in. They said they were willing to do whatever was necessary to help, except that they were incapacitated by their economic status. However, those in the focus groups were of the view that some rural parents had 'given up' because they could not meet the cost. They could not afford to buy books, pens, uniforms, let alone paying any money to the schools for any developmental projects, as the urban parents do. And they were aware that, even if the children passed the examinations and went to secondary schools, they (the parents) would not be able to pay the fees required for secondary and university education.

But the following were their ideologies:

- Education of their children is the only thing that can alleviate their poverty.
- Poverty is the cause of all their problems. It has to be fought.
- School management plays a role in what happens at school. (The head teachers need to spend more time in the school).

- The use of L1 as MOI while English is the LOE makes their children fail.
- Role models are important in life. Their children lack focus because there are no role models to inspire them.
- Stakeholders need to work together.

### **The learners**

All the learners said that they valued education highly. This came out explicitly in the high hopes and expectations they expressed that they wanted to achieve through success in school. All the learners portrayed very positive attitudes towards their work and education in general. But the rural learners conceded that:



...many of our colleagues just do not want to read. They have the I-do not-care attitude because they do not hope to go to secondary school since their parents tell them that they do not have the money for fees...

The following are the basic ideologies the learners had.

- Hard work is imperative. They have to work hard in school in order to be successful in life.
- Practising English is very helpful. It can help them a great deal while writing examinations.
- Success in school is important. It is the only thing that can improve their social and economic mobility as it can enable them

get good jobs and live comfortably and enable them to visit and work in other countries.

- They need to be disciplined and respect other people.
- Educated people are respected and important.

One important thing I noticed was that the urban learners were more focused and held higher expectations compared to those held by the rural learners. For example, while the urban learners wanted to become members of parliament, ministers, the rural learners talked of becoming district and local leaders.

While analysing the various respondents' attitudes, values and ideologies, one deciphers a few things. One of these is that most of the respondents, rural and urban, have very positive attitudes, values and ideologies about the educational achievements of the young generation coming up in Uganda. All of them want the children to be educated and come out as high achievers. But, as it will be proved in Chapter Six, there are a few rural people who are resigned to their fate and are complacent. They seem to have been driven into that kind of attitude by the conditions they are living in. Another thing is that the attitudes, values and ideologies of the adults: teachers, head teachers, teacher trainers and the parents have very great impact on the learners (McGroarty 1996). Finally, I realised that in spite of the abject poverty, most of the rural respondents indicated that they would really like to see the young people in the rural areas get a good education and succeed in school with the hope that success in school is the only thing that can help them out of the poverty.

## **5.6: Conclusion**

The findings I have discussed so far profess to the fact that, truly, there exists a perturbing rural-urban divide in the Iganga district in particular and in Uganda in general. This chapter has demonstrated that the language in education policy and the disparity in the mediums of instruction, among other factors, have played a role in constructing that divide. The policy, as it stands at the moment, is hegemonic and needs to be revised to help Uganda to bring up a population that can effectively contribute to national development. The findings discussed here also show, as will be proved in the coming chapters that the stakeholders prefer to have English as the MOI. It should, however, be remembered that, as McGregor (2000) warns, no language policy can be imposed, if the people were to refuse to cooperate. This implies that there needs to be a change in the language in education policy, a change in people's attitudes besides provision of the required instructional materials and training the teachers for the task. As will be shown shortly, much needs to be done to bridge the gap that exists between the rural and urban learners' academic performance. Some of the things that need to be done are articulated as recommendations in Chapter Nine.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### LITERACY PRACTICES IN RURAL HOMES AND SCHOOLS

##### 6.1: Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings about the home and schooled literacies among the rural learners in the Iganga district in Uganda. This is in a bid to fulfil objectives one, two, three and the nine as articulated in section 1.8 of this study

It should be noted that from the NLS point of view, home and schooled literacies can be deduced from a thorough analysis of what goes on in these two settings (the home and the school) and through studying the literacy practices that exist in the people's lives in those communities. To do so, this study used qualitative research methods. Data was collected by means of interviews with head teachers, teachers, and teacher trainers, and also by means of focus group discussions with parents and learners. Additional data was also collected through lesson observation and home visits. A detailed account of the samples of the respondents, why and how they were selected has been given in Chapter Four. For full texts of the notes made during the interviews, discussions, lesson observation and home visits see appendixes A to G.

The analysis of the data about the home and schooled literacies found in the rural areas in the Iganga district yielded three main themes. These were exposure, mediation and models, and skills development. This analysis deals with those three main themes. This chapter thus covers data related to:

- (1) Exposure:
  - (a) The environment;

- (b) The facilities and materials in the homes;
  - (c) The facilities and materials schools have available which could be used to aid the acculturation and development of the learners' literacy practices.
- (2) Mediation and models:
- (a) The acculturation and scaffolding processes
  - (b) The parents
  - (c) The teachers.
- (3) Skills development:
- (a) The types of skills that are inherent in the literacy practices;
  - (b) The development of skills
  - (c) The impact those skills have on the learners' academic achievements.



## **6.2: Exposure**

Exposure, in this context, refers to access to literacy practices. The findings of this study indicate that access to literacy practices is influenced by various factors. Among those factors, this study paid attention to the environment in which the learners find themselves, the facilities and materials in the homes schools which could be used to aid the acculturation and development of the learners' literacy practices. The exposure to literacy practices is underscored here in line with the argument that supportive literacy practices enhance the learning process leading to good academic achievements (Heath, 1994; Barton, 1999).

### **6.2.1: The environment**

The impact of the home environment on a child is indisputable. The conditions in which we are born and raised usually affect us greatly almost throughout all our lives. This is particularly true in the education process. Many studies, especially in NLS, have accentuated the need to seek out and build on the positive literacy aspects children bring with them as they enter school (Street, 1996, 2000; Heath, 1994; Barton, 1996; Gregory, 1994: 49; Gregory and Williams, 2000: 39; Hall, 1994: 17; Fishman, 1989: 467). This is in the belief that those positive aspects can enhance the learning process, because the children would have a concrete foundation on which to build as they deal with the new concepts. It was for that reason that an effort was made in the current study to scrutinise the physical environment in order to establish the kind of scenario in which the learners live.

#### **The physical environment in the rural homes**



Through the visits I obtained a clear picture of the physical environment of the rural homes. There was a need to visit the typically poor rural homes to get a feel for what life is like for the rural learners. This would facilitate a distinct comparison with the urban homes (see Chapter Seven) to highlight the differences that exist in the two dichotomous settings in which primary school learners are nurtured. Below are the descriptions of the rural homes which were visited.

#### **Home 4**

The house, for this home, is made of mud and wattle and is grass-thatched. The parents are uneducated (never went to school) and jobless. The house is small for the family. There are four children for the couple and the mother is pregnant. There are also three orphans, whose parents have died of AIDS, living with this family... the children look malnourished... There is one table, three chairs and a bench. Some of the

children sleep on the floor... The children's clothes and bedding are not so clean and some are torn... The water source, a borehole, is about one and a half kilometres away and there is no electricity. They use a tadooba (see section 1.15 for the definition) for lighting. The kitchen is a small grass-thatched hut a few metres from the main house ...they use firewood as fuel ... (extract from field notes).

### **Home 5**

For this home, the house is made of mud and wattle with an iron roof but it is rather small to accommodate a family of this size. They have six biological children. They have three other children staying with them because the home is 'near' the school (about two and a half kilometres away). There is one table and a few chairs. The father in this home studied up to P 7 and the mother went up to P 5. Both parents are peasants... The furniture in this home is made up of a table and a few chairs. Some of the children sleep on the floor... The children's clothes and bedding are not so clean and some are tattered... The water source is a well about two kilometres away and the water looks milky (safe?) and there is no electricity. They use a tadooba for lighting... the kitchen is a small grass-thatched hut a few metres from the main house, the fuel is firewood ... (extract from field notes).

### **Home 6**

The house for this home is made of mud and wattle with an iron roof, but it is visibly too small for the whole family. It is a polygamous home. The man has four wives and eighteen children. The oldest is about 22, is married and has a family. The youngest is about three months old... The man is a grocer in the trading centre nearby. The women are just housewives. The man and two of the wives went to school but none went

beyond P 7... the other two wives never went to school. Two other boys have constructed their own grass-thatched huts in the same compound and some of the young children are staying with the elder brothers. There is one table and several chairs. The children's clothes and bedding are dirty and some are tattered ... There is a borehole about one and half kilometre away from the home... There is no electricity, so they use tadoobas for lighting. The houses are very close to each other and there is a lot of noise in the compound all the time... the kitchen is a small grass-thatched hut a few metres from the main house, the fuel is firewood ...(extract from field notes).

From the description of the state of the homes poverty is evident. The houses are small, yet the families are big. The children sleep on the floor; they have dirty and tattered clothes and beddings. They have no access to running water or electricity. There is scanty furniture in all the homes and there is poor lighting. Discussions with the parents and learners and the interviewees revealed that most of the rural homes in the Iganga district are in a similar state to the ones I visited, while others are in worse state. A crowded place with poor lighting is hardly convenient for the kind of reading that could facilitate the development of supportive literacy practices, and learning in general.

### **6.2.2: Facilities and literacy materials in the rural homes**

NLS are of the view that literacy practices are embedded in people's lives (Street, 1996, 2000; Heath, 1994; Barton, 1996; Banda, 2003). But there are some basic facilities and materials that ought to be in place, which can facilitate the acculturation, scaffolding and development of those literacy practices. The presence of such facilities and materials is important because they play a crucial role in either enhancing or inhibiting the acculturation, scaffolding and mediation processes during the development of those literacy practices (Machet, 2001; Galda, et al 2000; Hall, 1994). The primary reason for visiting homes and observing lessons in classes was to

establish what facilities and materials were in place, which could facilitate the acculturation, scaffolding and development of those literacy practices. The literacy practices in place would help in the process of accounting for the disparity between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements.

### **Facilities in the rural homes**

In this study facilities are considered to include the social amenities that make life easy so that the children are healthy, happy and ready to learn any practices that are being acculturated. From the above sections it is clear that the rural learners live in small and congested homes, with insufficient furniture, most likely drinking unsafe water and using poor lighting facilities. It is also apparently true that most of the parents are uneducated and have no jobs and therefore have no stable sources of income. Therefore, it would not be an overstatement to say that they might, often lack money and many may not be able to afford to feed their children well, meet their social needs and to give them the medical attention they might require when they fall sick, which, according to the respondents, happens very often.

The rural homes did not have TVs, partly because they could not afford buying them and partly because there is no electricity in rural areas. The three homes I visited had radios. The mother in home 4 informed me that:

The radio is only switched on when it is time for news and some discussion programs of the father's interest because we cannot waste the expensive batteries on just any program ...even the children know that the radio is not for anybody or for listening to any programme...(From field notes made during the home visits).

There was a radio in home 5, but most of the time I was there it played only music. The children seemed to be interested in the music only. The mother said they

sometimes listened to the news in Lusoga and Luganda, but she confessed that she had no time for listening to news regularly. However, she added that:

...he (her husband) listens to news and other discussion programmes ...when there is anything interesting he tells us ...he sometimes discusses some of those things with the bigger children ...the children rarely listen to the radio by themselves ...he discourages them ...the batteries are expensive ... (From field notes made during the home visits).

### **In home 6**

There was a radio in this home but nobody showed any interest in it except the little children who enjoyed dancing whenever there was music playing on it ...two of the mothers said they hardly ever listen to radio programmes ...added that they sometimes listen to news if someone says there is something of interest or when they happen to be in the company of their husband when he is listening...but it was not a habit they were all keen on ...most of the children are only interested in music and football ...(From field notes made during the home visits).

The evidence from the visits to the homes confirmed the data collected from the other sources. The discussions with the focus groups had revealed that listening to radio programmes was not a common practice among the rural children and that when sometimes they did so, they mainly listened to Luganda and Lusoga programmes, music and football matches. This tells us that the rural children have limited access to programmes that would provide them with information which relates to the subject content they learn at school, and which would aid them to improve their self-expression (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 75). It was established that almost all rural parents speak Lusoga in their homes. This means that the children do not get

exposure to English, the language of the academic discourse in Uganda. They do not get it from their parents or from listening to radios.

Furthermore, the data reveals that there are no housekeepers in rural homes. Fetching water from the wells and/or boreholes, collecting firewood and many other domestic chores are done by the children in addition to helping the parent to work in the fields. The girls do most of the household chores, while the boys attend to the few animals if there are any. This means that the rural children spend a lot of time helping out at home rather than engaging in those activities which would enable them to develop literacy practices that would aid their education process. Thus, for the girls the initial home literacies relate to knowing housekeeping, fetching water and domestic chores. Literacy practices for the rural boys relate to attending to animals and running errands or being ‘messengers’ for the elders in the village. Important to note is that all these are oral-based practices. It can be argued that they help to develop the listening skills of these children, which are required during the learning process. But it means that these rural children lack exposure to the written mode of communication, which is crucial to examinations. They also lack exposure to academically oriented literacy practices.

### **Literacy materials in the rural homes**

The educators, parents and the learners attested to the scarcity of literacy materials in the rural homes and the visits proved them right. There were hardly any literacy artefacts in the rural homes.

In **home 4** the only literacy artefacts were:

... the children’s exercise books. The P 2 and P 1 children had three exercise books each, one for Mathematics, one for English and the third was used for everything else ... checking the books revealed that

there were some exercises but they had only a few numbers in each and some were not marked though some were dated some months back ... The 'general' book had work of SST, Science, Handwriting and Fine Art... The older children had four exercise books each ... A quick glimpse in the books revealed that there were some exercises but they had only a few numbers in each and many of the exercises were not marked ...(From field notes made during the home visits).

Asked about buying textbooks for his children the father in home 4 said:

... if I had money I would buy them enough exercise books and the textbooks but I cannot afford ... they are very expensive and we parents from the rural areas just cannot afford them...(From field notes made during the home visits).

Asked whether they ever see any other written materials in their home one of the children in home 4 revealed that:



...the only other written material we sometimes see here at home ... sometimes we buy things and they are wrapped in old newspapers but we throw them away ...I have never bothered to read such pieces of paper ... (From field notes made during the home visits).

## **Home 5**

...there were hardly any literacy artefacts in this home ...I saw children's exercise books ...the work done at school as reflected in the exercise books was very little... with many unmarked exercises ...some of the work was marked by fellow learners ... The children in this home had four exercise books each ... the mother said she buys the books for the children ... She said that she sells some items like sugar canes, ripe bananas, groundnuts and maize at the school during mid morning and lunch break to get some money to cater for the

domestic needs and provide the children with books and pens. “Their father is not so much bothered,” she said ... (From field notes made during the home visits).

Asked whether they ever see any other written materials in their home, the older two children told me that they sometimes borrow some textbooks from the teachers without the headmaster’s knowledge and one of them conceded that:

...sometimes we buy things and they are wrapped in old newspapers ...I have never bothered to read such pieces of paper ... (From field notes made during the home visits).

### **Home 6**

...there were hardly any literacy artefacts in this home ...there was a calendar in the sitting room. I saw children’s exercise books ...the P 7 boy had borrowed the textbooks of Science and SST from his teacher “... because the teacher likes me because I perform well in class. He wants me to keep reading during the holidays.” ...This boy’s books were neater than the rest in this home and those I had seen in the other rural homes and showed that he was a bright child. He told me that the father could not buy him textbooks “because if he did then all the other children would also demand and he cannot buy for everybody.”... The books for the other children were just in the same state as those in the other rural homes...like in the other rural homes; these children hardly read any thing at home... (From field notes made during the home visits).

It is evident that there is a serious lack of literacy artefacts in these homes. Yet a vast body of research in NLS and other studies such as those by Banda (2003); Baker (1994); Bamgbose (2000); Machet (2001); Gee (1996); Heath (1983); Wells (1986) and Dickinson (1994) state that access to material and academic oriented activities is

invaluable in the process of developing the children's literacy practices and their education as a whole. Bearing that in mind makes it is easy to see the impact of the lack of such materials on the rural children. It all comes to be reflected in their poor academic performance in the rural school. Unfortunately, that poor performance ends up playing the positioning role as to what they are to be in their future lives.

### **6.2.3: Facilities and materials in rural schools**

For the greater part of the week, the growing children spend most of the time they are awake in school. This implies that whatever takes place at school gets deeply entrenched in their lives. The basic purpose for children going to school is to learn, but learning can only take place when the facilities in place are conducive to it and when there are materials that can facilitate that learning. Data about the facilities and materials that facilitate the acculturation, scaffolding and development of literacy practices in rural schools were collected both through interviews and the observations that took place in the classrooms and in the schools in general. As will be demonstrated, the facilities and materials in place in schools, just like in homes, play an inestimable role in either enhancing or inhibiting the acculturation, scaffolding and development of literacy practices, and in the education process.

#### **Facilities in the rural schools**

Facilities in the schools include the infrastructure that the schools possess, which could facilitate the learning process. They include furnished classrooms, well stocked libraries, clean water, radios, TV, electricity for the boarding schools among other things.

Some of the rural schools had big classrooms of about 6 metres long and 6 metres wide. In some of the schools the classes were smaller. Many of the classrooms in the rural areas had neither doors nor window shutters. They were few and not well

furnished. The furniture was not enough for the large numbers of learners (see table 6.1 below). In the P 3 classes observed, five or six learners shared a one-metre long desk if they could fit. In the P 6 classes four or five learners would share a desk of the same size where they could fit. Some learners would sit in the few desks available; others sat on the floor while many would stand either on the sides or at the back of the class. The teacher-learner ratio in these schools was very high (see table 6.2 below). According to Cotton (1996) and Berlin and Cienkus (1989) this makes the classes difficult to manage and implies that the teachers have less control over the learning process. That was the case in the lessons observed. It was easy to see that a lot of time was spent on maintaining discipline in the class. Observation also revealed that the teachers were always confined to the front of the classrooms, as they could hardly find any space that would facilitate movement around the class. In all the observed lessons no teacher attempted to move around the class. This tells us that teachers were unable to give individual assistance to learners, because they found it difficult to get to them.



**Table 6.1 shows the enrolment of the rural classes that were observed**

School	F	G	H	I	J
P 3	107	121	111	133	122
P 6	97	87	95	107	120

The rural schools had very few buildings. Hence, for lack of room, all those learners would be in one classroom and under the charge of one teacher. These were the figures recorded in the class registers.

**Table 6.2 shows teacher-learner ratio in rural schools in this study**

<b>School</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>Total enrolment</b>	<b>Teacher-learner ratio</b>
F	10	1005	100.5
G	13	1352	104
H	11	1165	105.9
I	17	1890	111.2
J	8	922	115.3

The rural schools had no libraries. The few textbooks and supplementary readers in these schools were, in most cases, safely locked up either in the head teachers' offices or in small bookstores. Several reasons were advanced for locking up the books. These included the fact that the head teachers were accountable to the DEO' office for these books and they feared that if exposed they would get lost. They also reasoned that the books were too few to be distributed and that the children lacked a reading culture so they never asked for the books.

The rural schools did not have tap water. The water source for schools F, J and I were boreholes while G and H got their water from wells some distance away from the school premises. It was difficult to tell whether the water the children accessed was safe. However, the compounds and the classrooms were quite clean. These were all government day schools. They had neither radios nor TVs accessible to the learners. They had no electricity.

In general the facilities in the rural schools were not sufficient. The congested and barely furnished classrooms could not freely or easily enhance the acculturation and

development of schooled literacy practices, which would be very supportive to the learning process.

### **Literacy materials in rural schools**

All respondents confirmed that the rural schools did not have sufficient literacy materials. Observation established that these schools did not have enough textbooks. The only sets of reference books for the teachers were the teachers' copies accompanying the learners' textbooks given to schools. There were very few textbooks and supplementary readers to be shared by the large numbers of learners. But as stated above, in most cases, even these were safely locked up either in the head teachers' offices or in small bookstores. The head teacher of school H explained that:

... you see the readers are so few ... whom will you give and whom will you leave out? In any case these learners do not show any interests ... they do not have time to read ... you see, they will only lose them and yet you are accountable for the books... (Extract from the field notes made during the interview).

I did not see any general knowledge books, magazines, periodicals, brochures or any newspapers in the rural schools. The few books in these schools were in English even for P 3, which was supposed to be taught in Lusoga (see Chapter Five). There were hardly any charts or reading cards in the classrooms.

The situation about the availability of books in rural areas could be summed up thus:

There were textbooks for all subjects but they were not many ... the books were supplied by the govt. No child had a personal copy ... the schools do not buy any textbooks for their learners ...the books are shared between three, four or even more learners depending on the

number of the books and the learners in the class during that lesson ...all the textbooks are kept in the bookstore and the key is kept in the headmaster's office. The textbooks are fetched when required by the teachers for a particular lesson. There are no storage facilities in the classes ...there are some supplementary readers in the head teacher's office, which show no sign of usage at all ... (Extract from the field notes made during the classroom observation).

This was recorded about school H. Observation established that the situation was like that in almost all the rural schools. The data established that the government supplies the few textbooks and supplementary readers to the schools. The rural schools have to use what the government supplies. Neither the parents nor the schools buy any books for their learners. The parents are required to buy exercise books, pens, pencils and mathematical sets where they were required for their children, but some of them said they could not afford most of the school requirements.



Indeed, observation also established that many of the learners did not have exercise books, while others lacked writing equipment and many of those who required mathematical sets (in P 6) did not have them. The various sets of supplementary readers were not accessible for the learners to read in their own time. There were no printed or hand-drawn charts and diagrams of any subject on any of the walls in the classrooms.

Machet underscores the importance of learners having access to literacy materials when she points out that if one wishes children to learn to read fluently and understand the role literacy plays in their lives, the materials with which they will learn these skills must be available (Machet 2001: 6). This implies that the availability or lack of facilities such as libraries and academic literature both at home and in school can intensely impact on the acculturation and development of the

supportive literacy practices. During the discussions with the rural parents, both in the focus groups and during the home visits, the parents acknowledged that they do not buy artefacts such as charts or textbooks for their children. They conceded that the rural children first come in contact with books and pens when they go to school. The above description of the environment, both at home and in school tells us that the rural learners have little access to the supportive materials that would enable them to learn more easily (Galda, et al 2000). The impact of that scarcity becomes noticeably evident in their academic achievements and it, eventually, tends to account for their poor performance.

### **6.3: Mediation and models**

The mediation process begins with acculturation, proceeds into scaffolding and eventually leads to the development of the literacy practices which mature into the skills the children put to use as they progress through the education process. This whole process is long and can be laborious, depending on how it is handled. In addition, it is a unique process because it has no crystal-clear milestones along the way. That makes it complicated and demands that it has to be fostered carefully (Lyytinen, Laakso and Poikkeus, 1998).

#### **6.3.1: Acculturation and scaffolding of literacy practices**

Acculturation is the process of instilling useful practices in children while scaffolding is nurturing those practices/skills (Hall, 1994; Saxena, 1994; Wells, 1987). The process of acculturation involves a number of things, which include putting materials in place, drawing the child's attention to them, making sure that the children notice those materials and guiding the children so that they start using those materials in ways that would benefit them (Machet, 2001: 4; Barton, 1999; Saxena, 1994; McGroarty, 1996: 19; Lyytinen, Laakso and Poikkeus, 1998). In the process the

children start ‘playing’ with those materials. The parents and/or caregivers then gradually ‘teach’ the children how to use the materials.

### **Acculturation of literacy practices in rural homes**

It was established that, in fact, the rural parents do very little in terms of introducing their children to literacy or introducing to them the literacy practices that matter in school, in the greater Ugandan social and economic spheres. The parents do put in some efforts and a bit of time but very little money, if any. Four major reasons were given for this.

1. Most of the rural parents are peasants and have no tangible steady sources of income that would give them money to invest in the acculturation of the literacy practices for their children.
2. Many of them never went very far in their own education while others never went to school at all. These might, genuinely, not know what to do.
3. Some of those who might have an idea of what should be done may not have the capacity to do it.
4. Others have just succumbed to their ‘fate’ and are not ready to bother any more.

Almost all rural parents accentuated that poverty was their greatest undoing. Sentiments that came through from almost all respondents indicated that many of the

rural parents would put literacy artefacts in their homes and provide stationary and textbooks for their children if they had the money. As the father in home 4 stated above, the exercise books and textbooks are too expensive for the majority of the rural parents (see also Tomasevski, 1999).

The education level of the parents was one factor that was established to be affecting the acculturation of and mediation in the development of the supportive literacy practices of the rural children. Discussions revealed that many of the rural parents who were lucky to have gone to school had not, for one reason or another, gone beyond even P 7. Examples can be given using the parents of home 5. The mother said:

... I studied up to P 5 and my parents said they had no more money to keep me in school any longer ... I had also grown big, I was about 16 years old they (the parents) wanted me to marry before I conceive and embarrass them ...(Extract from the field notes made during the visit to home 5).

The father in this home explained that his father died when he was in P 7 and that it marked the end of his education.

Data from most of the respondents show that most of the rural population are not educated. The result of this is that they hardly deal with print and the written word. Therefore, the children do not get a chance to watch their parents working with books or even just reading newspapers. In the process the children grow up without experiencing any printed materials until they meet them at school. The implication of this is that they start attaching value to print quite late in their lives and this stalls the general acculturation process. From their experience in the home the rural children do not get to know much about the academic literacy practices of their community. Thus,

they have no emergent theories about what literacy is and about how to learn (Barton 1999: 183) until they go to school.

Most of the parents in the uneducated category then, are those who may not know how to initiate the acculturation let alone scaffold or mediate the learning processes. Children from such homes have to wait and get to school to experience any form of schooled literacy, more so if they do not have any older schooling siblings.

Nonetheless, it was also established that some of the rural parents try to do what they can, even though many do not have an idea of what and how acculturation should be done. It was evident that these parents carry out some conscious acculturation. The discussions with the rural parents constructed the conscious acculturation process thus:



... we teach the children to count from 1 to 20 ...teach them a, e, i, o, u. Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, etc., and a few English words if one knows any ... (Extract from field notes).

### **Scaffolding and mediation of literacy practices in rural homes**

In an ideal situation, both parents and teachers carry out the processes of scaffolding and mediation in complementing ways. The parents play their part at home while the teachers do theirs at school. After initiating the development of literacy practices through acculturation at home, the parents would also continue guiding the children as they work with the materials they give them. Once the children start school the parents would continue working hand in hand with the teachers to ensure that meaningful learning takes place.

### 6.3.2: Parents' involvement

The rural parents conceded that they did very little to scaffold and/or mediate both the development of literacy practices and the education process in general. In home 4 the mother said:

...I teach my children to count from 1 to 20 ...teach them a, e, i, o, u. Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, etc., and a few English words that I know ... here in the rural area most of us trust that they will learn a lot more in school ... I teach them that because it is what you hear being taught (*recited*) as I pass by any school ... (Extract from field notes).

About homework she had this to say:



...many of us cannot help with homework because we really do not understand much of what the children learn in school ... sometimes you can only look at the books to see √ (ticks) and X (crosses) and keep on encouraging the children to work hard at school...(Extract from field notes).

The father in home 5 divulged that

... these children hardly bring any homework home ...when they do I give them time to do it ...usually after supper ...if there is paraffin ...we (parents) do not help with homework because we think that would be cheating ...we want the children to do it on their own ...to show that they are learning what they are being taught at school ... sometimes I encourage the older children to teach the younger ones a

bit of English and anything else they learn at school...(Extract from field notes).

In home 6, two mothers were somewhat educated (up to P 6 and P 7). I tried to speak to one of them in English but she was very shy. When asked why she was so shy, she said that she fears to speak it because her co-wives and the villagers "...can easily say that I am showing off." These mothers also said they expected the children to learn everything from school. One of the mothers said that they (the mothers):

... teach their children to count from 1 to 100 or as far as the children can go and "...teach them a, e, i, o, u. Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, etc. ... (Extract from field notes).

There was one mother who said she is trying to learn a few English words from her children. Two of the mothers had never been to school. These admitted that they hardly looked at their children's books. One of them explained that they did not look at the books:

...because we cannot understand what is in them ... when we do we ...just want to see whether there are any ticks and we encourage the children to work hard at school ...when you see ticks in their books you know that the child is learning something at school ...the children do not bring any homework ... even if they did there is not much we can do ...we are not in position to help them yet the father is too busy looking for money to support the big family ... (Extract from field notes).

Many of the parents in the focus groups described similar experiences. This gives a clear picture of minimal acculturation and scaffolding. By the time these children get to school they know just the little they have learnt to recite, but have almost no

experience with the world of books (Hall, 1994). According to the rural teachers, many of them do not know how to handle a pencil or how to handle the book the right side up by the time they go to school (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). The P 3 teacher from school H articulated their experience thus:

We start from scratch. Most of the children come when they cannot handle the book the right side up ...we have to teach them that just as we stand on our feet the pictures of people in the books should also stand on their feet. We have to teach them how to handle the writing equipment. There are no nursery schools around here and the best most parents can do is to teach their children counting from one to ten and reciting 'a, e, i, o, and u'. But even then there are some who come when they cannot even count up to five. We have to start them off writing on the ground before we introduce books and pencils. We spend the first term giving them the preliminaries and the basics of being in school. This beginning level greatly impacts on the acquisition of the schooled literacies and their later academic performance. We always have to move slowly and we rarely complete the syllabus content for any particular year ... (Extract from field notes).

### **Parents' involvement in the mediation of the learning process**

From the foregoing sections, it can be ascertained that the rural parents do very little to help the acculturation and development of the literacy practices and to scaffold and mediate in the education process of their children. These parents also rarely take off time to discuss any academic work. Observation during the visit to the homes established that most of the interactions in the rural homes revolved around the domestic chores that the children have to do. This can be seen from the following interaction between mother and son recorded during the visit to home 4:

Mother: Tom, run to the house and bring the plates and wash them.

Tom: Okay mother.

Mother: Where is Sarah?

Tom: Playing outside.

Mother: Tell her to go and get me some water [from a well 2 kilometres away]. And tell Jane to check on the food. (Extract from field notes).

Another example of common interaction heard during this study in the rural home 5 was:

Parent: When you get back from school today you go to Njayo's (relative) home and ask him to come over and see me tomorrow.

Child: Yes papa I will go.

Parent: Make sure you come early. You know Njayo's home is far and I want you to be back before dusk. (Extract from field notes).

Most of the parent-child interactions observed in rural homes related to parents sending the children on errands and domestic chores. The interactions are far from being school-oriented. This tells a lot about the parents' participation in the scaffolding and mediation in the education process of their children.

What emerges from all this is that there is a general lack of parental mediation for the rural learners. It is noteworthy that this is a discrepancy from what scholars embedded in the NLS underscore as would be helpful in the learning process. Barton (1999); Hall (1994); Heath (1982) and others articulate the importance of the role of home literacies and parental and/or caregivers in the development of the children's

schooled literacy. Comprehensive research also explicates the great importance of joint book reading, the number of books in the home, access to literacy artefacts (e.g. crayons, pencil and paper), and literacy interactions (e.g., visits to the library and the child and adult making shopping lists) in learning about the purpose and value of print and ultimately for learning to read and the role they play in the education process of children (Payne, Whitehurst & Angell, 1994; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Roberts and Burchinal, 2001). Joint reading is one of the activities which constitute mediation.

Research also has it that a lot of things happen during the process of children reading and interacting with their parents and/or caregivers about a wide variety of academic and non-academic topics. It is reported that the process advances the children's language development, increasing their understanding and use of vocabulary, structure of story narratives and other language structures. They gain a lot of knowledge about the conventions of print, letter-sound correspondences, and acquire vast linguistic awareness (Bornstein, Haynes & Painter 1998; Hart & Risley, 1992, 1995; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1990; Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer, & Lyons, 1991). Using all these, the children develop concepts about the subject content they are taught in school. That process allows adults to scaffold and support the children's interactions allowing them to acquire higher levels of discursive skills. It facilitates the development of certain styles of interactions such as describing, labelling, and focusing on meanings and inferences are also developed. All these are particularly facilitative of literacy skills, which are very helpful in the learning process (Roberts and Burchinal 2001: 236- 237).

Problems arise when such interaction is lacking, as it is in the case of the rural areas in the Iganga district. The lack of adult-child interaction implies that the children cannot develop the supportive literacy practices and the skills that accrue from those practices. The New Literacy Studies posit that much of what happens in the home

lays the foundation for what later takes place in school (Street, 1994, 2000). In this case the foundation is shaky or non-existent and the end result is poor academic performance.

### **Scaffolding and mediation of literacy practices in rural schools**

As seen above, the rural schools have inadequate infrastructure in place. They have very few books, hardly any charts and lack many other learning materials for their learners. All the informants of this study attested to the meagre schooled literacy support from the homes, schools and community in general.

The respondents revealed that the teachers in the rural schools were sometimes complacent and not committed to their work (see Chapter Five). Frustration could also be sensed from some of the teachers' responses. This feeling came out clearly during the interviews. The P 6 teacher in school J articulated it best when he said:



Whatever you do, never seem to be enough. You try this, this and that but nothing seems to work ... the results never improve ...you sort of give up...sometimes you look at a situation and really see that there is nothing much you can do about it...take for example the orphans who come with nothing ...where are you going to get money from to give them all the exercise books and pens they need? ... (Extract from field notes).

### **Teachers' involvement**

Interviews established that most of the teachers in the rural schools commute from their homes, some of which are as far as ten kilometres from their schools. The lucky ones have bicycles, but most of them walk varying distances to get to and from their stations of work.

Officially, the schools are supposed to open at eight o'clock in the morning and run up to four or five o'clock in the afternoon. It was ascertained that most of the teachers get to the schools after half past eight while others arrive even after nine-thirty. Those who stay near the school go for lunch at their homes because the rural schools do not provide lunch for teachers and learners. When they go for lunch, many of them return after two-thirty when the afternoon classes are supposed to begin at two o'clock and there are cases when some do not return at all. Those who do not go for lunch have to improvise in any way they can, or teach in the afternoon while hungry. During the afternoon many of the teachers start leaving school as early as three o'clock. In reality most of the teachers in the rural schools do not spend a lot of time in school with the learners. They teach the lessons, but many admitted that they rarely helped the learners with their academic work beyond the class time.

Classroom observations revealed that the teachers made efforts to teach. They tried to explain the concepts and tried to engage the learners by asking questions. But they did this amidst difficult conditions. Quite often the answers were slow in coming. In most cases there was noise in the classes and a good amount of time was spent on maintaining discipline. It was mainly the learners at the front of the classes who seemed to be fully attentive. Lesson observation established that in P 3 classes Lusoga was used as MOI and occasionally the teachers translated a few basic words to English. Even in P 6 classes Lusoga was still being used with some translation (see Chapter Five). In most of the classes observed the situation could be describes as:

... some learners, especially, those at the back were absent-minded and a few were just chatting with those who were close to them... The learners did not ask questions but a few tried to answer those asked by the teachers. Some of the answers they gave were not correct ... In most of the English lessons I watched I could see that the learners could not easily get the answers from the book even where the answers were quite obvious... They read but they seemed very slow. A lot of

translation goes on even in P 6 ... some tried hard to answer in English ... they were not fluent but many tried ... They had problems with the vocabulary and in rephrasing the information in the books to answer the questions ... A good number put up their hands to answer the questions but some gave wrong answers ... The P 3 learners hardly participated in the literacy activities ...they did not ask questions but a few answered some of those they were asked by the teachers... almost all the answers were in Lusoga ... the teacher translated the answers to English and asked learners to repeat them ...many had books but a good number had neither books nor pencils ...a few who had books borrowed pencils from their friends, others waited for the friends to finish before they could write ...(Extract from field notes).

Engaging learners by enabling them to participate in the activities taking place in class, making them answer and ask questions is important during the learning process, but, for tangible learning to take place, the atmosphere needs to be conducive.



The above description depicts a very trying situation for both the teachers and the learners. These are congested classes. The textbooks must be shared and some learners do not have exercise books while others lack writing equipment. The numbers of learners in these classes are big. All these factors make maintaining discipline close to a nightmare and teaching and learning almost impossible. This means that it is difficult for the teachers to foster a productive scaffolding and mediation process in the rural schools.

Records showed that the rural schools had very few teachers. The teacher-learner ratios were very high (see table 6.2 above). The respondents were of the view that most of the rural schools' problems stemmed from the fact that they did not get any financial help from the parents. Thus, they could not employ more teachers so that they could reduce the teacher-learner ratio. They could only have those employed and

paid by government. They could not improve on the infrastructure. They could neither buy more textbooks nor other learning materials for lack of resources.

As seen above, most teachers in the rural schools come late and leave early, because they have to work in their gardens to be able to supplement their meagre government salaries, and as the schools cannot pay them any more money to help them get by. Life seems hard on the rural teachers and it makes them unable to spend more time in the schools teaching and/or attending to any queries the learners might have. Many of the learners also travel equally long distances to school, and like their teachers come late and leave early to get home before nightfall. And, as these schools do not provide lunch for the learners and the teachers, many of the learners have to stay hungry up to the time they get home. All these matters, in addition to the insufficient learning materials and poor facilities, impinge on the acculturation, scaffolding and mediation of the schooled literacy practices and the learning process in general. In a nutshell, all this is tantamount to poor academic performance for the rural learners.



## **Models**

Access to radios and TVs in homes enables the children to have access to a variety of speakers and many of them present good models from whom the children can learn pronunciation, sentence structures and reasoning analogies and can gain a great deal of information (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 75). Those skills are vital in the learning process. Moreover, in many cases the information presented on the programmes is related to, or is part of the syllabus content these children are learning at school. In such cases the children have an opportunity for receiving the information twice, but through different modes and from different perspectives. This aids their memory and helps them to internalise the information. It is easier for children who hear facts over and over again to remember them when they are required to write them in exams than for those who do not get such opportunities outside of the classroom. As already seen above, the rural children have very little access to radios and none to TVs. As a result

they do not access the language models, the information and the skills that accrue from that kind of exposure.

The rural areas are more adept to preserving culture. The rural learners in the Iganga district are culture-bound just to listen while adults including, teachers, parents and any other adult people with whom they may happen to stay, talk. Being silent when a child is talked to is a sign of respect and shows that the child is attentive. The rural children rarely discuss anything with adults. As evident from the interactions between parents and their children quoted above, home talk mainly revolves around domestic chores and errands. This means that these children are not seriously exposed to good language models at home. This means that, in as far as academic language development is concerned, these children do not really learn a lot from their parents. For example they cannot practice discursive skills or practice manipulating information to suit various situations. This cultural instinct is extended to school. This is partly the reason why they take long to answer teachers' questions (see objective 6 in section 1.8).



Furthermore, in rural areas, most of the teaching at school and the communication at home are conducted in Lusoga. Yet English is the language of academic discourse in Uganda. The sections discussed earlier in this chapter show that most of the rural learners have no exposure to English at home. And at school their exposure to this language of education is also very limited. Having no access to good models means immense lack of exposure to the language of the academic discourse. The lack of sufficient textbooks means that they hardly read the subject content for themselves. This implies that they cannot develop vocabulary, sentence structures and discursive skills from either the good models or from extensive reading. But, when it comes to doing their examinations, they are required to use English with which they have had little experience. The lack of literacy practices in, and experience with the language of examination curtails these learners' grasp of content and their ability to read and

understand the examination questions, and limits their self-expression while doing the examinations.

In a nutshell, there are many subtle issues that impact on the development of literacy practices, the exposure to, acquisition and use of the language of the academic discourse in the rural areas in the Iganga district. Highlighted above are the lack of materials, facilities and language models. All these make teaching complicated for the teachers and learning tedious for the learners resulting in the evident learners' poor academic achievements.

**Table 6.3 shows a summary of the data about the literacy practices in rural areas as collected from the different groups of respondents.**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Classroom observation</b>	<b>Focus group discussions</b>	<b>Home visits</b>
Literacy artefacts /access to print	Some print exists in schools, almost none in homes	There are a few maps in P 6 &7 classes Hardly any other artefacts e.g. cards, charts	Very little, if any, literacy artefacts in schools Almost none in homes	Confirmed almost non-existence of print and other artefacts in homes
Books in the homes/school	Children's exercise books None for parents in homes. Some school textbooks	Some text books but too few for the big classes almost no other books	Hardly any for both children and parents	Hardly any for both children and parents
Joint book reading	Hardly any with teachers, none with parents and	Not much Observed only in one school	None reported by parents or learners	Witnessed none

	other adults			
Homework	Very little, if any, & teachers rarely help learners with class work or homework	No homework books seen	Both learners and parents reported that almost no homework is done in the rural homes	No evidence of homework done Only one boy in home 6 had some textbooks to read
Literacy interactions	Hardly any both in school and at home	Almost none but a few attempted answering the teachers' questions	Hardly any takes place both in school and at home	None took place.
General interactions with language models	All said learners hardly interact with adults	Observed very little T/L interaction in & out of class	Rarely interact with adults except when required to	Witnessed some tense interaction with adults present

#### 6.4: Skills development



Research indicates that supportive interactions with good models, meaningful scaffolding, and exposure to vast print materials and to the language of the academic discourse go a long way in helping learners in acquiring and developing the literacy skills which end up being very useful in their academic endeavours (Banda, 2003; Baker, 1994; Bamgbose, 2000 and Machet, 2001).

Developing the learners' skills demands effort and time from all the people involved. It requires guidance and mentorship from knowledgeable people, and intense practice on the part of the learners. In this case, the learners would need a lot of guidance and practice in the supportive and vital skills, which they need to develop. This implies that frequency, quality, scope and intensity of access to the skills being developed matter a great deal. While discussing the impact of quantity, duration and intensity in language learning Strevens asserts that:

Of these, total quantity is doubtless the greatest single determinant of potential achievement, other things being equal, but intensity is likely to have a strong effect on whether the potential is achieved (Stevens, 1989: 49).

This study is of the view that this does not only apply to language learning but also to the acquisition of literacy practices and skills, because their acquisition is interdependent on language acquisition. The acquisition of literacy practices and the inherent skills entails having comprehensive practice in many of activities such as reading, interpreting, and manipulating information, discussing and writing about the information the children read, and what they listen to both at school and at home. This is imperative, because many of the academic tasks including examinations require high quality discursive practices, which can only be developed if children are exposed to the written form of language and to speech models and are given opportunities to practice the emergent literacy skills.

However, as evident from the foregoing sections, the rural learners in the Iganga district hardly get any exposure to literacy practices before they enter school. When they get to school, they get some exposure, but it is of a narrow scope, it is in small quantities and it is not intense. The rural learners, rarely if at all, discuss any academic or non-academic topics with their teachers and they are culture-bound not to talk back to their parents and/or other adults. This, in a way, curtails their chances of developing their discursive skills, which would come in handy during examination. The fact that the more the child is exposed to literacy practices and models in language the more that child benefits has been proven by research (Heath, 1983, 1994; Street, 1996, 2000; 2001; Barton, 1999; Machet, 2001; Gee, 1996; Wells, 1986 Dickinson, 1994; White, 1982). This means that a lack of that kind of exposure ends up accounting for the wide gap that exists between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements in the Iganga district.

### 6.4.1: The literacy practices in rural areas and the skills developed from those practices

Skills develop as a result of constant engagement in literacy practices. It has been established above that the rural learners engage in some few literacy practices and literacy activities while at school. The teachers try and indeed monitor the few activities that take place in the classroom at school. But for most of the learners, there are no such activities at home. For the various reasons given above many of the rural parents are unable to monitor those activities at home. Nonetheless, this study endeavoured to establish the activities the rural learners engage in both at school and at home that help in the development of the supportive skills. The findings are shown in the table below.

**Table 6.4 shows the activities the rural learners engage in that help the development of the supportive skills at school and at home**



<b>Skill developed</b>	<b>Literacy Practices at home</b>	<b>Literacy Practices at school</b>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bit of revision when approaching exams</li> <li>• Read reports and letters for their parents and/or neighbours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes revise notes</li> <li>• Occasionally read text books</li> <li>• Notices</li> <li>• A few read supplementary readers</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes write letter for their parents and/or neighbours</li> <li>• A bit of homework occasionally</li> <li>• Besides that, they hardly write anything</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercises</li> <li>• Notes</li> </ul>

Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to radio a bit but mainly to L1 programmes.</li> <li>• Some listen to stories told by their parents.</li> <li>• Listen to instructions about domestic chores and errands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to teachers in class and when they are sending them on errands</li> </ul>
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting errands to the parents and other adults</li> <li>• A few occasionally discussing a few radio programme with the fathers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answer questions in class</li> </ul>



#### 6.4.2: How the skills are developed

Table 6.4 shows the activities in which the rural learners engage, and the skills that accrue from the little practice they get. These are the activities the respondents gave as those that are common both in many of the rural homes and in most of the rural schools. What is noticeable is the fact that the rural children have very limited exposure to literacy practices and lack exposure to the language of the academic discourse and even to model and/or adult language per se. The work in their exercise books bore witness to very few exercises done and even then many of those few were not marked. This indicates a lack of feedback and consequently a lack of proper guidance. The lack of sufficient reading materials means that the children cannot read on their own even if they had the time. With almost no help from parents and with minimum contact with the teachers, these children have everything against them and thus, they have to labour against numerous odds in order to acquire any useful skills

that accrue from literacy practices. The bottom line is that the rural children end up lacking the crucial skills demanded by the rigours of the education process.

#### **6.4.3: The impact of different skills on the learners' academic achievements**

The impact of supportive skills on learners' academic achievements is invaluable. That impact is normally reflected in the good performance those in possession of such skills put up during the writing of the examinations (see Chapter Seven). But the development of those skills depends on the presence of good facilities and learning materials in addition to the help rendered by both parents and teachers. Through reading the learners access a lot of information from the textbooks and any other sources available to them, but if the materials to be read are lacking, as is the case for the rural learners in the Iganga district, then the skills that accrue from reading cannot be developed. That would mean that the learners would have problems with reading, interpreting and understanding the syllabus content, because they lack that practice. Lack of exposure to model language, both oral and written, limits the reasoning ability and discursive skills to be gained which would be used in answering the examination questions to the satisfaction of the examiners.

The learners need to practice listening to a variety of information from different sources to be able to polish and use the listening skill to access what is taught in class. This practice could be possible if the learners had opportunities to listen to and to try to get information from TVs and radios and adults as they talk about various issues or as they discuss both academic and non-academic topics. This would also enable them to internalise and supplement what they are taught in class. But the rural learners in this study do not have such opportunities. Instead, they just listen to the teachers for the time they are in the classes or to adults when they are giving them instructions about errands, domestic chores or in the few instances when the adults deem it

necessary to talk to them. This implies that the learners develop limited listening capacities and this can easily be inhibitive in the learning process.

Extensive speaking with their parents and their teachers would expose the learners to discursive skills, a wide range of vocabulary, language structure and self-expression. The information and expertise they would get through this and the other skills would aid the learners' writing skills, which are crucial in the writing of examinations.

In essence if the learners developed these skills fully, the acquired skills would go a long way in augmenting the learning process. This would enable the learners to be confident enough to participate in class and to enjoy the learning process. The result of this would be that the children would be well prepared for the examinations and thus, excel. This is not the case for the rural learners in the Iganga district. The conditions prevailing in their homes and schools are far from conducive to learning and the exposure to literacy practices is limited. Consequently, their skills are inadequate. The pedagogical implication of this is that their capabilities for learning are greatly curtailed and limited and thus, their performance falls below what is required by the selective examination system that exists in Uganda.

## **6.5: Conclusion**

One of the major questions this study has tried to answer has been: How does the availability or lack of facilities e.g. libraries and lack of materials such as academic literature both at home and in school impact on the learners' academic achievements? This chapter has demonstrated two things. It has demonstrated that the rural learners who participated in this study had very limited access to facilities and materials that aid learning both at home and in school. Secondly, it has demonstrated that the rural learners lack language models and they do not get sufficient guidance from either teachers or parents.

This chapter has shown that the home literacy practices in which the rural children are mostly involved, relate to domestic chores and running errands. These practices are in Lusoga and generally oral and not academically orientated. As it was shown in rural schools, these learners receive most of the instruction orally and in Lusoga. It was explicit that there were no textbooks in Lusoga and even those in English, the language of examination, were not enough for the big enrolments in the rural schools.

Therefore, the rural data demonstrates two mismatches. First, there is a mismatch between the medium of instruction and communication at home and in school (Lusoga) and the language of academic discourse and examination (English). The second mismatch is between the modes. The instructions at home and at school are mainly oral, and yet the education system, through examinations, emphasise the written mode through which the learners are evaluated and their achievements graded.



From the foregoing discussions, it can be concluded that the salient mismatches that exist between the mediums of instruction at home and school, and lack of exposure to sufficient quantity and quality of the oral and written mode, have very serious negative repercussions for the rural learners' education process. This, in the final analysis, means that the conditions at home and in school make learning difficult for the rural learners. All these factors have connived against the rural learners giving them no opportunity to perform well in examinations. Performing poorly at that stage relegates the rural learners to poor secondary schools and their lives are affected forever.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### LITERACY PRACTICES IN URBAN HOMES AND SCHOOLS

##### 7.1: Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings about the home and schooled literacies among the urban learners in the Iganga district in Uganda. This is in a bid to fulfil objectives one, two, three and the nine as articulated in section 1.8 of this study.

Drawing on NLS this study contends that home and schooled literacies can be deduced through a thorough analysis of what goes on in these two settings, the home and the school, and through studying the literacy activities that exist in the people's lives in those communities. To do that this study used qualitative research methods. Data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions, lesson observation and home visits. A detailed account of the samples of the respondents, why and how they were selected has been given in Chapter Four.

This chapter uses the same pattern that was followed while presenting and discussing the findings about the rural area in Chapter Six. Thus, the analysis deals with the three main themes: exposure, mediation and models, and skills development. Thus, this chapter covers data related to:

(1) Exposure:

- The environment;
- The facilities and materials in the homes

- The facilities and materials schools have available, which could be used to aid the acculturation and development of the learners' literacy practices.

(2) Mediation and models:

- The acculturation and scaffolding processes
- The parents
- The teachers

(3) Skills development:

- The types of skills that are inherent in the literacy practices
- The development of skills
- The impact those skills have on the learners' academic achievements

## **7.2: Exposure**



Chapter Six defines the concept of exposure as perceived in the context of this study. It also highlights the various factors that impact on the learning process that the children undergo (Heath, 1994; Street, 1996, 2000; 2001; Barton, 1999; Machet, 2001). This chapter analyses the environment in which the urban learners find themselves, the facilities and materials in the homes and facilities and materials the schools have available that could be used to aid the acculturation and development of the learners' literacy practices.

### **7.2.1: The environment**

The environment in the main urban area of the Iganga district, where the schools in this study are located, differs greatly from that in rural areas. As already mentioned elsewhere, the urban area has the basic amenities such as running water and electricity. Most of the urban dwellers have sources of income and, as will be

demonstrated shortly, they are in a better position to look after their families than the impoverished rural people.

### **The physical environment in the urban homes**

Visits to the homes gave a clear picture of the physical environment in the homes. Below are the descriptions of the urban homes that were visited.

#### **Home 1**

This home is situated in the main town of the Iganga district. It is a decent middleclass home; a bungalow in a fenced compound and the environment is good. It is a permanent house with running water and electricity. There is sufficient and luxurious furniture and it is conducive to home study. The children have their own well-furnished bedrooms with almost all the amenities that make life comfortable... The father is a businessman and the mother is a dentistry lecturer in a nursing school in Jinja, about forty kilometres away...she drives to and from work every working day. They have three children aged 12, 9 and 6... These children go to good schools (A and D in this study). The only other person in this family is a housekeeper... (Extract from field notes).

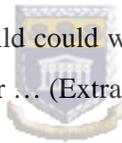
#### **Home 2**

This was an urban home. It belongs to a single mother. She is a secondary school teacher of English Language and Literature. She lost her husband some years back. She has three children aged 15, 12 and 8. This home is a decent home and the environment is good. It is a spacious permanent house with running water and electricity. There is comfortable furniture and it is quiet and conducive to home study. It is in the secondary school teachers' quarters. It is very comfortable. All the children go to boarding schools. There were two other people

staying in this home: the lady's sister who also teaches in the same school and a housekeeper... (Extract from field notes).

### Home 3

This home is also situated in Iganga town. The father in this home is an accountant and the mother is a businesswoman. They are both university graduates. They have six children aged between 15 and 2. All the school-going children go to good schools (A and B in this study). This is a wealthy home and the environment is good. It is a permanent house within a fence with a very spacious well-kept compound, running water and electricity. There is plenty of comfortable furniture and it is conducive for home study. The children seem to have everything a child could wish for. The only other person in this family is a housekeeper ... (Extract from field notes).



Evident from these descriptions is that these are quite wealthy middleclass homes. The houses are big and spacious but the families are small. The children have almost everything a child would wish for, like spacious bedrooms, comfortable beds, an abundance of clothes and various toys. They have access to clean water and electricity. All the homes have an abundance of luxurious furniture. It should, however, be noted that not all urban homes may be of the same fabulous standards as these ones. But the fact remains that many of the urban homes are much better than the rural homes. Many of them use electricity while others use charcoal stoves for cooking. Many of them do not have dependants. The educators, parents and learners attested to that. Life in such conditions is likely to be healthy, supportive and conducive to the development of supportive literacy practices and learning in general. As stated elsewhere, I chose to visit and describe the rich middleclass homes and the poor typical rural homes described in Chapter Six for comparison purposes.

Moreover, the homes described above reflect the type of home that everybody would wish for and would strive to have other issues notwithstanding.

### **7.2.2: Facilities and Literacy materials in the urban homes**

As discussed in Chapter Six, while analysing the learners' exposure to literacy practices, it is imperative that one establishes the facilities and materials in place that facilitate the acculturation, scaffolding and development of those literacy practices, because they play a crucial role in either enhancing or inhibiting these processes (Machet, 2001; Galda, et al. 2000; Hall, 1994).



#### **Facilities in the urban homes**

From the above sections it is clear that the urban learners had spacious homes, sufficient furniture, safe water and good lighting facilities (since they had electricity). The fact that the parents were educated and had money from their good jobs meant that they could afford to feed their children well, meet their social needs and give them medical attention that could keep them healthy.

In addition, the urban homes had radios and TVs. The parents said that their children watched TV and listened to radio programmes from infancy. The mother from home 1 said that:

When they are young they (the children) like watching cartoons but expand the watching scope as they grow, eventually you start suggesting some good programmes, many of them academic, for

them... some of which you make an effort to watch and discuss with them... (From field notes made during the home visits).

These parents use these facilities well as the mother from home 2 reported:

I have a schedule that is followed and my children now know that they can only watch TV at the times I set for them. If you do not set such rules and enforce them seriously then the children will not do anything else. They will spend all their time watching TV programmes and movies... (From field notes made during the home visits).

She went on to say:

When I am at home I have to keep an eye at the kind of programmes they watch. I have to monitor the programmes just to ensure that they do not get on to those, which can erode the morals I have hitherto tried so hard to instil... (From field notes compiled during the home visits).



The other urban parents expressed similar views. The parents visited said that they sometimes watched TV and listened to the radio with the children and discussed what they saw and heard with them. They divulged that this gave their children an opportunity to acquire and develop global literacies (e.g. those based on information technology and multimedia). Through such literacies the children can gain access to more information and knowledge that later turns out to be helpful in their education process. Comparison of the above with the condition in which rural learners live (as seen in Chapter Six) elucidates the difference in the two settings, which, to some extent accounts for the difference in the learners' achievements.

## Literacy materials in the urban homes

In contrast to the responses about the rural homes, as given in Chapter Six, the urban educators, parents and learners professed to the presence of abundant literacy materials in the urban homes and the visits proved that indeed the urban homes had a wide range of these materials.

Home 1 had a rich variety of literacy practice artefacts. There were calendars in the sitting and dining room and in the kitchen. There were charts for nursery school and P 1 in the sitting room. One of the charts had numbers 1-100, one had the plain alphabet, one had the alphabet but with sets of words accompanying each letter and one had pictures of some of the household items with their names. I learnt that these were meant for the P 1 girl. There were also photographs with captions in the sitting room.



There was a big bookshelf with a wide range of books. Many of them were children's books. These included many of the textbooks used from P 1 to P 6. The P 6 boy said:

...all the books I use at home and school in each class are bought by my parents and kept when I go to the next class.

All the books on the bookshelf were in English except two Bibles and two Hymnbooks. These were in Luganda. There were stacks of English newspapers and *Time* magazines on top of the bookshelf. There were also food packs, insecticide containers and brochures in different places in the house that had instructions written on them which children could read.

In the boys' bedroom there was a table and two chairs, which the boys used when they were studying. There were storybooks, a variety of charts for both SST and

Science, copies of *Young Talk*, *Straight Talk* and the *Children's Vision*. The P 3 boy narrated a story he had read from one of the books and read a part from the English Bible. He was fluent in speaking and reading English. The exercise books used by the boys at school were neat and orderly with very good work in them.

The girl's room was not very different. There were pictures she had drawn pasted on the wall. There were also some simple storybooks from the 'Lady Bird' series.

Later on the girl read for me one of these books and she seemed to know the story very well. She commented on the pictures in the books appropriately (From field notes).

In home 2 there was an abundance of printed charts and the children's work on the walls in the sitting room, dining room and bedrooms. There were two bookshelves in the sitting room. One had the mother's books and the other had the children's books. The books in the children's bookshelf were relevant to the children's classes though there were more for the primary section among the children's books. There was a wide variety of readers. There was a stack of newspapers, several copies of the *Parents* magazine and other brochures.

There was a collection of indoor games, which included chess, scrabble, snakes and ladders and monopoly.

I played scrabble with the P 7 boy and P 3 girl and I concluded that they had a good command of English (From field notes made during the home visits).

About these games the mother had this to say:

... those games are invaluable to me... They have done a lot in building my children's mental faculties and they help to keep them

busy... to avoid getting into mischief...they baby-sit my children...(From field notes made during the home visits).

### **Home 3**

This home also had a rich collection of literacy artefacts. There was an abundance of printed educational charts and mottos on the walls in the sitting room, dining room and bedrooms. There was a big bookshelf in the sitting room. It had an abundance of books for the parents and textbooks for the children. There was a pile of newspapers on top of this bookshelf. There was a smaller bookshelf with more of the children's books in the bedroom used by the older children, which were relevant to their classes. There were also some storybooks on the children's bookshelf. In another bedroom, the girls' room, there were some of the P 3 and P 2 children's work and a few charts pasted on the walls.



Unlike what was in the rural homes as seen in Chapter Six, the facilities in the urban homes depict comfort and health for the children. These are factors, which greatly impact on the learners' lives and education process. Commenting about this, Galda, Cullinan and Strickland (2002: 279) point out that environmental influences are always present in the classroom and they advise that the physical and emotional environment should invite children to explore and learn both at home and at school. The environment in the urban homes as described above, allows the urban children to explore and learn a great deal even before they go to school, but the environment prevailing in the rural homes from this study is inhibitive to learning.

The abundant presence of literacy artefacts implies that the children in the urban homes interact with a lot of written materials when they are at home. The bookshelves packed with books act as the family libraries from where the children keep and access books. They learn to look after their books and start developing value

for books from an early age. This means that when they reach school and find a lot of written materials in the form of textbooks, cards and charts there, they are the same or similar to those at home. Life does not change so much for them. There is continuity and learning is easier for them because, as Barton (1999) observes, there is no clear-cut demarcation between what goes on in the home and what goes on in school. There are almost no books or literacy materials in the rural homes. That means that, for the rural children, life is totally new and very different from that at home. As such, adjustment is slow and it takes time for them to get used to school. The learning process takes long to start, more especially so since they have almost no academic background on which to build (Street, 2001).

Furthermore, Francis (2000) underscores the importance of narratives in the initial stages of literacy development and argues for both the written and oral narratives. Evident in these urban homes is that, unlike the rural children; the urban learners have access to both the oral and written narratives. The scope of their oral narratives is also wide since they get it from parents, teachers, TVs and radios. They get the written mode from the extensive interaction with the books they read. This implies that these urban children have sufficient quality exposure to both the written and oral modes of communication, which are crucial to examinations and that they also have sufficient exposure to academic oriented literacy practices. For these children, what happens at home is a perfect and complete match with what happens at school. That goes a long way in assisting them during the learning process. Thus, they end up being at an advantage and performing better than their rural counterparts.

### **7.2.3: Facilities and materials in urban schools**

Data about the facilities and materials that facilitate the acculturation, scaffolding and development of literacy practices in urban schools was collected both through interviews and observation. It should be remembered that in schools, just like in

homes, the facilities and materials in place play an incalculable role in either enhancing or inhibiting the acculturation, scaffolding and development processes.

### **Facilities in urban schools**

As pointed out elsewhere, facilities in the schools include the infrastructure in place that serves to ease the learning process. They include furnished classrooms, well stocked libraries, clean water, radios, TVs, and electricity for the boarding schools among other things.

The urban schools had big classrooms of about 6 metres long and 6 metres wide, just like some of those in the rural schools, because some of them were built by government and others were constructed on specification given by the government. But unlike in the rural schools, the classrooms that were observed in the urban schools had enough furniture for two learners to share a one-metre long desk. The teacher-learner ratio in these schools was low (see table 7.2 for teacher-learner ratio and compare with table 6.2). In schools A, B and C some classrooms had unoccupied desks. This made the classes manageable for the urban teachers, allowing them to have more control over the learning process as less time was spent on maintaining discipline in the class (Cotton 1996; Berlin and Cienkus 1989).

**Table 7.1 shows the enrolment of the classes that were observed**

School	A	B	C	D	E
P 3	50	53	30	66	40
P 6	43	48	30	51	61

**Table 7.2 shows teacher-learner ratio in urban schools in this study**

<b>School</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>Total enrolment</b>	<b>Teacher-learner ratio</b>
A	14	358	25
B	20	402	20
C	13	210	16
D	40	1400	35
E	46	1900	41

In addition, the urban schools had big libraries, which were very well stocked with a wide range of books. There were textbooks, supplementary readers, and other books covering all subjects of the curriculum. There were sets of reference books for the teachers, many general knowledge books, magazines, periodicals, brochures and newspapers. All these books were in English. The learners in the urban schools had access to the books (see Appendixes B and F) unlike in the rural areas where they were locked up for fear of being lost (see Chapter Six).

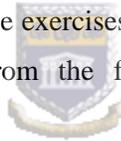
The urban schools had tap water and the compounds, classrooms, dinning rooms and dormitories for the boarding schools were very clean. They had electricity and the boarding schools had radios and TV, which were very accessible to the learners.

In general the urban schools had the facilities that could augment the acculturation and development of the learners' schooled literacy practices and thus, the physical environment was very supportive to the learning or education process.

## Materials in urban schools

All respondents confirmed that most of the urban schools had enough textbooks, other books, such as supplementary readers, and many other reading materials for their learners (see appendixes A, B, D, E and F). In the observed lessons each learner had a textbooks to himself/herself and indeed, in many instances in all the urban schools there were a number of textbooks left unused. In all these schools there were at least two sets of different textbooks for both mathematics and English. The P 6 teacher from school D explained that:

We have a variety of textbooks because it makes you to cover a wider scope of exercises in any given topic...we use them at all times ... you just choose which one you want to use while teaching and then you can also let the children do the exercises from the other sets especially as homework... (Extract from the field notes made during the interviews).



All the learners had exercise books, pens and mathematical sets where they were required. In schools A, B, D and E the learners had two sets of exercise books per subject, one for class work and one for homework. There were various sets of supplementary readers for the learners to read in their own time. There were also charts and diagrams for almost all subjects; some printed and others hand-drawn on the walls in the classrooms.

It was established that the government supplied some textbooks to the schools. But in cases where what was supplied was not enough the urban schools, specifically those I visited, had bought more to ensure that they had enough for their learners to use comfortably. School D bought exercise books, pens and pencils for its learners. The

parents of children in schools A, B, C and E bought the scholastic materials for their children.

As stated in Chapter Six, the availability or lack of facilities such as libraries, academic literature, both at home and in school, can intensely impact on the acculturation and development of the supportive literacy practices. The environment, both at home and in school, tells us that the urban learners have access to an abundance of supportive materials and this exposure enables them to learn more easily (Galda, et al. 2000; Machet 2001) and the impact of that abundance becomes noticeably evident in their academic achievements. According to Galda, et al, then, this could be one of the reasons for the poor performance in rural schools.

### **7.3: Mediation and models**



As already observed in Chapter Six, the mediation process begins with acculturation, proceeds into scaffolding and eventually leads to the development of the literacy practices which mature into the skills that the children put to use as they progress through the education process. It is a very important process in children's lives and it contributes immensely to the learning that takes place in school.

#### **7.3.1: Acculturation and scaffolding of literacy practices**

Acculturation is a long process which entails having literacy artefacts in place and drawing the child's attention to them. It requires the parents and caregivers to skilfully and gradually 'teach' the children how to use the materials in place (see section 6.3.1).

## **Acculturation of literacy practices in urban homes**

It was ascertained that contrary to the rural parents, the urban parents invested much effort, time and money in introducing their children to literacy. They did this both intentionally and unintentionally. Most of them were literate and spent time dealing with print. In the process the children grow up surrounded by print and in that way they grow up attaching value to it. Secondly, as the children watch their parents working with books or reading newspapers they realise that books/newspapers are to be read, thus inadvertently the children are acculturated into the world of books (Bus, 2001).

This is exactly what Barton has in mind when he remarks thus about the children:

From their experience in the home children know about the particular language and literacy practices of their community. They have emergent theories about what language is, about what literacy is, and about how to learn. It is important to see how this knowledge is taken up by schools (Barton, 1999: 183).

In addition, parents also reported conscious or intentional acculturation. The discussions with the urban parents constructed the conscious acculturation process thus:

... Organising a lot of reading and writing activities for the children ... this starts very early from around the age of two... buying charts and books starting with picture books... setting aside some time to “read with their children” ...this sometimes starts with just seeing and talking about the pictures with the children, any pictures, it does not matter whether these are pictures in the newspapers or in those little books we buy for them. Gradually you move from one level to another...teach

them songs such as counting rhymes ... give them paper and pencil so that they can doodle and scribble...teach them to count and recite the alphabet... then introduce the charts so that they can associate the figures and letters with what they have learnt to recite... as they grow you start teaching them to write figures and letters of the alphabet... (Extract from field notes).

Unfortunately the rural children do not have such experiences to initiate them into the world of books. This explains why their learning process takes long to take off.

### **Scaffolding and mediation of literacy practices in urban homes**

As observed in Chapter Six, both parents and teachers need to carry out the processes of scaffolding and mediation in urban areas in complementing ways. The parents play their part at home while the teachers do theirs at school. After initiating the development of literacy practices through acculturation the parents should continue guiding the children as they work with the materials they give them. Once the children start school the parents need to continue working hand in hand with the teachers to ensure that learning takes place.

### **Parents' involvement**

The fact that urban parents are formally educated means that they are capable of getting directly involved in their children's education, and indeed most of them do. One of the major reasons for their active involvement is that, based on what education has made them to be, they want to give their children a head start and ensure that the children succeed in school. These parents are at an advantage because, unlike the rural parents seen in Chapter Six, they know what needs to be done to help the children in the learning process and they also know how to do it. Thus, they reported

two different ways in which they scaffolded and mediated both the development of literacy practices and the education process in general: through personal intervention and by using experts.

Personal intervention takes place when the parents decide to participate in and to monitor the development of the learning process of their children as it progresses. As seen above, once they put the materials in place, then they make sure that the children notice and use the materials they have around them. The father in home 1 explained that:

You have to start training the children early... teach the child how to hold a pencil well, how to handle the book the right side up... they have to know that they need to sit quietly and do their work, doodle or copy what you have written for them for sometime... then they bring it to you, just look at it and make appropriate comments and encourage them... let them read to you from the books you have bought... discuss the pictures with them and read to and with them ...this has to start long before they go to school... (Extract from field notes).

The parents in the other urban homes and the discussion groups described similar experiences. That is a clear description of acculturation and scaffolding. By the time such children get to school they already know what to do with books (see also Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). According to the teachers, many of them actually know how to read and write a few things. The P 3 teacher from school A reported that:

... by the time our children come to P 1 they have learnt a lot from their parents. They know how to read and write the alphabet and can

count and write the numbers. They can write their names and some simple words such as pen, book, boy etc... (Extract from field notes).

### **Parents' in the mediation of the learning process**

Data collected from all respondents attest that urban parents continue buying books even when the children start school. They always make sure that homework is done and done correctly. Observation during the visits to the homes also ascertained that the urban parents helped their children while doing homework and they also organised academic work for their children in addition to the homework brought from school. These parents also took a keen interest in what happened at school, as can be seen from the following interaction between father and son recorded during the visit to home 1:

Father: Peter what did you learn in English today at school?

Peter: We did comprehension. We read the passage about the mad man and the slave.

Father: That sounds interesting tell me about it.

Then Peter narrates the story and the two discuss it at length.

Another example of interaction to that effect heard during data collection in one of the urban homes was:

Parent: Hey, where are you going?

Child: Mom, I am going to see a movie, *Silent Witness* is about to begin.

Parent: Have you finished doing your homework?

Child: Yes mom, all the exercises, and even those numbers you told me to rewrite.

Parent: Let me see your homework and class work books first.

The child runs off to get the books.

This kind of supportive mediation helps the children so that they go through education more easily than the rural children who never get it. It gives the urban children confidence right from childhood which sustains them throughout their education. This spells success for the urban children. The lack of supportive mediation leads to lack of confidence, which makes the rural children's education process laborious, and as already seen, often it ends in failure to get good grades.



In addition, this study established that, unlike the rural parents who are culture bound not to, the urban parents interact with their children a great deal. They discuss a variety of topics including those about life in general and those about what they see and hear as they watch TV and listen to the radio. The parents intimated that they discussed many academic topics with their children and were of the view that such discussions were vital, since they stimulated the children's mental abilities and helped the children to internalise what they studied. By implication then, the stimulation of rural children's mental abilities is limited because their interaction with adults is limited.

Furthermore, a lot of things happen in the process of children reading with and to their parents, watching TV and listening to radio with them and discussing what they read, hear and see and while discussing many other academic and non-academic topics. This process advances the children's language development - increasing their understanding and use of vocabulary, structure of story narratives and other language

structures. They gain a lot of knowledge about the conventions of print, letter-sound correspondences, and acquire vast linguistic awareness (Bornstein, Haynes & Painter 1998; Hart & Risley, 1992, 1995; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1990; Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer, & Lyons, 1991). The children develop concepts about subject content. The adults scaffold and support the children's interactions allowing them to acquire higher levels of skills. Certain styles of interactions such as describing, labelling, and focusing on meanings and inferences are also developed. All these are particularly facilitative of literacy skills (Roberts and Burchinal 2001: 236 - 237). This implies that the rural children are at a great disadvantage, because they lack all of this.

Besides personal intervention, the discussions revealed that many of the urban parents get experts to help their children with homework by giving them extra exercises so that they practice more with their academic work. This is usually done during the holidays and when the parents feel that they are either too busy or not very conversant with the work the children are dealing with at that moment. The experts who are usually teachers are paid for their services. But even when this is done the parents monitor the whole process. The father from home 3 explained that:

... when this 'teacher' attends to the children for about three or four days I take off some time to check the work they have covered in those days, compare it with what the children have been doing at school... this has to be done lest you will pay someone for no work done...  
(Extract from field notes).

What is clear here is that in contrast to the impoverished rural parents, the urban parents have the resources and so many of them can pay these experts. Evident then is that there is a lot of parental and/or expert mediation for the urban learners. This is in line with what scholars have expounded about the importance of the role of home

literacies and parental and/or caregivers in the development of the children's schooled literacy. In line with this, Roberts and Burchinal (2001) have this to say:

Home environmental factors important to children's emergent literacy acquisition include the interactions of the caregivers during joint book reading, exposure to literacy-related activities, and the responsiveness of the caregivers in the environment (Roberts and Burchinal, 2001: 236-237).

What is being explicated is that joint book reading, the number of books in the home, access to literacy artefacts (e.g., crayons, pencil and paper), and literacy interactions (e.g., visits to the library and the child and adult making shopping lists) are important for learning about the purpose and value of print and ultimately for learning to read (Payne, Whitehurst & Angell, 1994; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). In essence, the urban children gain a lot from the parental mediation. All this puts the urban children at an advantage above the rural children, and to some extent explains the achievement gap that exists between the two groups.

### **Scaffolding and mediation of literacy practices in urban schools**

As seen above, the urban schools have very good infrastructure in place. They have a lot of books, charts and many other learning materials for their learners. All the informants of this study attested to the presence of schooled literacy support. The interviews and observation revealed that the teachers in the urban schools profess and exhibit a lot of commitment to their work.

### **Teachers' involvement**

It was established that the teachers in the urban schools spend a lot of time in school with the learners, helping them with their academic work. The classroom observations revealed that:

...The teachers encouraged the learners to ask questions and they asked a lot of and answered all the teachers' questions. The teachers called for opinions, additional information and examples, which were also discussed freely... (Extract from field notes).

What transpired during lesson observations, for instance encouraging learners to ask questions, answering them, asking the learners a lot of questions and giving them opportunity to answer them, calling for their opinions, giving additional information or examples and guiding the class to discuss those examples and opinions freely, attest to a rich scaffolding and mediation process that takes place in the urban schools. During the lesson observation the teachers in these schools exhibited a wealth of skills in fostering their learners' academic process. The interactions between the teachers and the learners were cordial and a lot of work in the form of discussions and exercises was done.



Records hold that there were many teachers in the urban schools. The teacher-learner ratios were low (see table 7.2 above). Head teachers divulged that the urban schools received financial assistance from the parents and used part of it to employ more teachers for their schools, to pay all their teachers extra money to supplement the government salaries and to use some of it to meet educational demands, like buying more textbooks to supplement those provided by government. These schools provide accommodation for their teachers, in or near the schools, and according to all the respondents this enabled the teachers to spend more time in the schools teaching and attending to any queries the learners might have had. All of this ends up being very helpful to the learning process because it complements the scaffolding and mediation given by parents. From that one sees committed and happy teachers who spend a lot of time with their learners. Data from rural schools indicated that the impact of increased teacher-learner contact time was reported to have helped school F to

improve. That means, then, that the urban learners in the schools visited in this study benefit much from that contact, giving them more advantage over the rural children.

## Models

As already established above, the urban learners spend a lot of time communicating with adults: the teachers, parents and any other people they may happen to stay with. They also listen to radios and watch TV. Through all this they are exposed to good language models. In most of these activities English is used. English is the language of academic discourse in Uganda. Having these good models and such abundant exposure puts these learners at a further advantage when they read their subject content and when they do their examinations using a language they have had vast exposure to.



**Table 7.3 shows a summary of the data collected from the different groups of respondents about the literacy practices in urban areas.**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Classroom observation</b>	<b>Focus group discussions</b>	<b>Home visits</b>
Literacy artefacts /access to print	Abundant print exists in homes and schools	Enough books, plenty of other artefacts e.g. cards, charts etc.	Plenty of artefacts in schools and homes	Confirmed existence of plenty of print and artefacts in homes
Books in the homes/school	Plenty for both children and parents	Plenty of text books and many other books	Plenty for both children and parents	Plenty for both children and parents
Joint book reading	Many parents, visitors and relatives read	Could be inferred from learners' fluency and	Both learners and parents said that a lot of joint	Witnessed some and could tell that joint reading

	with the children	participation	reading takes place.	takes place
Homework	Teachers give plenty of it & help learners as they do homework	Saw homework books with plenty of exercises	Both learners and parents said that a lot of homework is done & parents help a lot.	There was a lot of evidence that plenty of it is done
Literacy interactions	Plenty of these take place both in school and at home	Plenty of cordial and informative interactions took place	Plenty of these take place both in school and at home	Plenty of them took place.
General interactions with adults	Learners interact freely with almost everybody	Many interacted freely & observed T/L interaction in and out of class	Learners interact freely with almost everybody	Witnessed a lot of free interaction with everybody present



#### 7.4: Skills development

Drawing from the already existing research and the findings as enunciated in the preceding sections (and in Chapter Six) of this study, it can be stated that supportive interactions, meaningful scaffolding and the exposure to vast print materials go a long way in helping the urban learners in acquiring and developing the literacy skills which end up being very useful in their academic endeavours.

As stated elsewhere, developing the learners' skills demands effort and time from the people involved. The frequency, quality, scope and intensity of access to the skills being developed matter a great deal (Strevens, 1984: 49). The acquisition of literacy practices and the inherent skills entail getting immersed in many activities such as reading, interpreting, and manipulating information. This, as already stated, can be done through the discussion of, and writing about the information the children read, and what they listen to both at school and at home. This is so because many of the

academic tasks including examinations require high quality discursive practices, which can be developed if children are exposed to the written form of language, speech models and given opportunities to practice the emergent literacy skills.

As already demonstrated, unlike the rural children, the urban learners get the exposure to the literacy practices early. This exposure is intense and of a wide scope (in large quantity). Based on how much information is displayed in the children's homes, it is easy to tell how much access to information the child has and how much that child interacts with both written and oral information on a day-to-day basis. The urban learners discuss varieties of both academic and non-academic topics with their parents and their teachers. This enables them to develop their discursive skills, which come in handy during examination. According to NLS and research, it is a fact that the more the child is exposed, the more that child benefits (Machet, 2001: 4; Barton, 1999; Saxena, 1994; McGroarty, 1996: 19; Banda, 2003; Goldenberg, 2001). The results discussed above seem to be in line with this as they indicate that the urban learners, who get more exposure to literacy practices and the language of the academic discourse, perform better than the rural learners. It can therefore be stated that this exposure ends up accounting for the wide gap existing between the rural and urban learners' academic achievements in the Iganga district.

#### **7.4.1: The literacy practices in urban areas and the skills developed from those practices**

As has been established, the urban learners engage in a variety of literacy practices and literacy activities while both at home and in school. Parents monitor those activities at home and the teachers monitor them at school. The activities engaged in by the learners and the skills developed are shown in the table below.

**Table 7.4 shows the activities the urban learners engage in that help the development of the supportive skills at school and at home**

<b>Skills developed</b>	<b>Literacy Practices at home</b>	<b>Literacy Practices at school</b>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story books</li> <li>• Text books</li> <li>• Charts and cards</li> <li>• Notes, shopping lists</li> <li>• Newspapers</li> <li>• Magazines</li> <li>• Adverts on TVs</li> <li>• Brochures</li> <li>• Adverts on billboards and walls</li> <li>• Information on food and medicine packages </li> <li>• Parents' books</li> <li>• Messages left for them by parents</li> <li>• Revising notes</li> <li>• Filling in crossword puzzles</li> <li>• Reading with and to their parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story books</li> <li>• Text books</li> <li>• Charts and cards</li> <li>• Notes</li> <li>• Notices</li> <li>• Newspapers</li> <li>• Posters</li> <li>• Brochures</li> <li>• Revising notes</li> <li>• Other library books</li> <li>• Magazines</li> <li>• Reading to their teachers.</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing home work from school</li> <li>• Doing home work organised by parents and/or 'home teachers'</li> <li>• Letters to other people</li> <li>• Notes from TV and radio programmes</li> <li>• Writing, costing and using shopping lists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing home work given by he teachers at school</li> <li>• Classwork exercises</li> <li>• Letters to other people</li> <li>• Doing home work organised by teachers</li> <li>• Doing home work organised by parents (some even go with it at</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messages for and from their parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school and do it during break)</li> <li>• Writing articles for newspapers, notice boards and school magazines</li> </ul>
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral academic quizzes</li> <li>• Listening as they watch TV</li> <li>• Listening to radios</li> <li>• Watching plays acted in English and or Luganda in theatres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing letters to colleagues, friends, siblings, relatives and other people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening to their parents read.</li> <li>• Discussing shopping lists.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting news reviews to the parents</li> <li>• Discussing what they watch on TV</li> <li>• Discussing academic work and other issues with their parents, neighbours, siblings, visitors, and other adults they stay with.</li> <li>• Playing games such as scrabble, chess, monopoly etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating in drama</li> <li>• Discussing academic work and other issues with teachers and colleagues</li> <li>• Speaking freely with other people</li> <li>• Reporting news reviews to other learners</li> </ul>

#### 7.4.2: How the skills are developed

Table 7.4 shows the activities the respondents gave as those which are common both in many of the urban homes and in most of the urban schools. The parents and the teachers make sure that the materials are in place and they guide the children so that the materials are used well. The important fact here is that the skills that accrue from these practices are the crucial skills demanded by the rigours of the education process.

### **7.4.3: The impact of different skills on the learners' academic achievements**

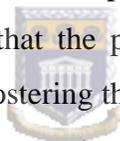
The impact of the development of those skills is reflected in the good performance they put up during the writing of the examinations. Through reading, the urban learners access a lot of information from the textbooks and any other sources available to them. They can read, understand the syllabus content and use the discursive skills gained to answer the examination questions to the satisfaction of the examiners. They use the listening skill to access what is taught in class and through the same skill they get more information from TVs and radios. This enables them to internalise and supplement what they have been taught in class. Speaking with their parents and their teachers exposes them to discursive skills, a wide range of vocabulary, language structure and self-expression. The information and expertise they get through the other skills aid their writing skills. Thus the developed skills augment the learning process by making the learners confident so that they participate in class and enjoy the learning process. The result of this is that the children are well prepared for the examinations. Being well prepared enables them to excel. The impact of that is highlighted through the poor performance of the rural learners, who do not have access to such exposure and mentoring.

### **7.5: Conclusion**

One of the research questions for this study, which I have tried to answer in this chapter, was: How does the availability or lack of facilities e.g. libraries, academic literature both at home and in school impact on the learners' academic achievements? This chapter has demonstrated that the urban learners who participated in this study had access to a lot of supportive facilities and materials that aid learning both at home and in school. It has also demonstrated that the teachers and the parents used the materials and facilities both at home and in school to acculturate, scaffold and mediate the learning process effectively. It has established that the urban learners

participate in a wide range of supportive literacy practices at home, which include reading, and writing and that they get engaged in academic and non-academic discussions, arguments and debates with their parents and they do that in English. What we find in most of the urban homes is almost a perfect match with what is at school. The activities in which the urban learners engage at home are critical to the initial literacy development, which is in turn critical in the education process. This puts them at an advantage because there is continuity between home and school.

This chapter has also established that while at home, the urban learners participate in writing and reading activities, debates and discussions, among other things and they do that in English. When they go to school they find English as the medium of instruction and this also gives them another perfect match between what takes place at home and in school implying continuity in the learning process. Since the rural learners who have the mismatches seen in chapter six, do not perform as well as the urban learners, it can be concluded that the presence of perfect matches between home and school goes a long way in fostering the education process, and thus impact, positively on learners' academic achievements.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 8.1: Introduction

This study has presented an in-depth understanding of the academic achievement imbalance that exists between the rural and urban areas in the Iganga district in Uganda. I have examined this rural-urban academic achievement imbalance through a scrutiny of the literacy practices that exist in the rural and urban areas. I have done this by, first of all, establishing the literacy practices into which the primary school learners in the Iganga district are acculturated in their homes, those they become involved in during their childhood and those they acquire during their education process. I have also endeavoured to analyse some factors that impact on those literacy practices. Informed by the literature review and the conceptual and theoretical framework in Chapters Two and Three respectively and guided by the objectives in section 1.8 and the research questions in section 1.11, the conclusions presented in this chapter are based on the outcomes of the interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis of PLE results, end of term test scores and comparison of the rural and urban learners' composition exercises (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Thus far, I can now make informed conclusions about the literacy practices, learners' academic achievements with regard to the rural and urban divide in the Iganga district in Uganda and the implications of these aspects on the rural and urban population in the country.

## **8.2: The literacy practices the learners are acculturated into in their homes.**

Evident in Table 7.4, I established that the urban learners are acculturated in a wide range of rich literacy activities from which they are able to acquire, develop and engage in a lot of supportive literacy practices long before they start going to school. I found out that the urban homes had many literacy artefacts; inter alia, books for the adults and for the children, charts, reading cards, newspapers, and magazines. The urban parents I worked with in this study attested that they, and most of the other urban parents took great interests in and made efforts to acculturate their children into reading and writing activities from a very tender age, by supplying literacy materials, initiating, scaffolding and mediating the literacy activities in which their children get involved. Most of these activities are academically oriented. But I found that most of the rural parents never do any of these. They do not acculturate their children into many literacy practices; they hardly scaffold or mediate in any literacy activities for their children. They introduce their children to counting as from 1 to 10 and reciting 'a, e, i, o, u' but not to the world of print before the children go to school. They never put any literacy artefacts in their homes for the children with which to gain any literacy experience before going to school. I also established that there are some local literacy practices, such as story telling, still going on in a few rural homes (only two of the ten parents from the rural focus groups reported that they told their children folk stories, but admitted that they no longer did it as often as they had used to). I discovered that there was a general lack of acculturation, scaffolding and parental mediation in the education process for the rural learners. However, the rural population did use some literacy practices, as in asking their older children to read the school reports for them, and occasionally to read and/or write letters for them when the need arose.

Reasons, discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, were advanced for the differential situations in the different settings. Among these were the different levels of parents'

education which greatly impacted on the parents' socio-economic status. These factors dictated the literacy practices that were found in each setting.

From the above, I conclude that the urban learners get a lot of support from the home literacy practices in which they engage, and receive great help from their parents, while the rural learners do not receive much support from home literacy practices and hardly any help from their parents. Based on the New Literacy Studies it is clear that much of what happens in the home lays the foundation for what later takes place in school. This means that the achievements of the primary school learners are greatly affected by the foundation and the help they get from home.

The pedagogical implication of all this is that the urban learners' learning process is greatly assisted by the acculturation, scaffolding and mediation they receive from their parents, and that this enhances their academic achievements in school, allowing them to perform better than their rural counterparts who do not receive the same kind of assistance.



### **8.3: Schooled literacy practices found in rural and urban schools**

A comprehensive analysis of the literacy practices that exist in the primary schools in the Iganga district as shown in Tables 6.4 and 7.4, and as reported in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, shows that when the urban learners join school they find an environment rich with a great deal of literacy activities. Using the foundation they come with, they engage in a yet richer variety of literacy practices. There is an abundance of reading materials in the classes and in the libraries and the learners practise a great deal of reading and writing, while in school, and they carry work home that is done with parental mediation and support. On the other hand the situation in the rural schools gives evidence of little class work, hardly reading in school and very little homework, and even this little bit, as I learnt, is scarcely done. There are no libraries in the rural

schools. There is an acute scarcity of reading materials and the few textbooks have to be shared by the large numbers of learners while some of the very few readers the schools have are never used at all for fear of being lost.

I established that the urban teachers are quite comfortable and very diligent in their work; they stay longer hours in school than the rural teachers. They attend to the learners with a lot of commitment and give and mark a lot of exercises while the rural teachers give only a few numbers, which are quite often not marked. Many of the rural learners do not do even the few numbers of the exercises given for lack of books, writing equipment or just lack of interest.

In essence, this leads to the conclusion that there is a wide, rich, range of schooled literacy practices that are developed in urban areas which is also intense in nature while the literacy practices developed in rural areas are very few, less intense and are less supportive.



The implication here is that the practice the urban learners get from the supportive and very organised literacy practices available to them enables them to access, internalise and use the syllabus content, the knowledge gained from what they are taught, what they get from their parents and what they read to do their academic tasks well in class and to successfully meet the challenge presented by the rigours of the national examinations resulting in the good performance they get. The rural learners lack both the access to and the practice with the supportive literacy practice and this affects both their in-class tasks and knowledge acquisition thus, impinging on their performance in examinations.

#### **8.4: The language in education policy, globalisation, acculturation and development of literacy practices**

Chapters One and Five and appendix J show that the language in education policy dictates that the urban learners use English from P 1 while the rural ones use their local languages as MOI from P 1 to P 4 and start using English as MOI from P 5. Table 5.4 shows that actually this is done: the MOI for the urban learners is English while that of the rural learners is Lusoga most of the time, up to P 7 in most cases. The results, as discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, show that the urban parents use English in their homes while the rural parents use Lusoga. The discussions in this study have given extensive reasons for this kind of scenario which include the fact that most of the rural parents do not know English and that the urban parents want to give their children a head start in the language of education.



The language of the academic discourse in Uganda is English. This, in essence, spells almost a perfect match between home and school literacy practices for the urban learners, since for most of them the home language is the same as the medium of instruction. Consequently, it tells us that there is a mismatch between the language of the academic discourse and the home language. And yet the results also showed that the rural learners use Lusoga for many years at school. This tells us that the urban learners have a vast quantity and quality exposure to the language of the academic discourse while that of the rural learners is limited. The insufficient practice in the language of the academic discourse curtails the development of supportive literacy practices and discursive skills, which are critical in the education process and this in turn results in the poor academic performance for the rural learners.

This leads to the conclusion that the mismatch between the language of academic discourse and the language of instruction contributes to the low grades of the rural

learners while the match that exists for the urban learners helps them perform well in school.

Besides that, according to all the respondents, and I concur with them, there is need to acknowledge the fast spreading wave of globalisation and the internationalisation of English with its inherent characteristics as the language of academic discourse, as a language of power and one that can enhance social and economic mobility. If that is acknowledged then there arises the need to find ways and means of ensuring that the rural learners are not excluded or left behind.

This leads to the conclusion that Uganda's language in education policy appears, inadvertently or otherwise, to promote unequal power relations with the urban population being on the favourable side. This is the crucial underlying impetus for the urban parents' choice to use English with their children and making sure that they put literacy practices in place to ensure that they help their children to develop that strong language proficiency and repertoire of academic discourse, which turns out to have a strong effect on and ascertains the children's academic success. It is for the same reason that the urban parents, as if in agreement with the policy, stress that their children must be taught in English and it is for that same reason that the rural parents are also demanding that their children be given more access to the language of the academic discourse. Noteworthy is the fact that exposure to the language of academic discourse greatly enhances the chances of success in education (Crookes and Schmidt; [NCCRD], 2000; Machet, 2001: 4; Barton, 1999; Saxena, 1994; Mcgroarty 1996: 19; Strevevs 1989: 49).

Based on that, I conclude that a combination of the internationalisation of English, the language in education policy, and globalisation has influenced the acculturation of literacy practices in the urban areas of the Iganga district, and that this is one of the plausible explanations for the differences between the achievement grades of the rural and the urban learners in this district. The urban learners are learning through

English, which is the language of academic discourse, of textbooks and of examinations. It is a language that is widely used inside and outside their classrooms (in school, in their community and at home). On the other hand the rural children are learning through the mother tongue to which they have no access in the written form, while they have to write their examinations in English. This leads to a situation wherein the urban learners develop a much higher proficiency in the language of academic discourse than the rural learners and thus, as seen in the samples of the learners' work discussed in Chapter 5, while the urban learners can express themselves coherently and fluently in academic tasks the rural learners cannot (Appendixes H and I). Consequently, the rural learners' lack of proficiency in the language of the academic discourse has a strong negative effect on their academic success.

The pedagogical implication of this is, as Hasan (1996) puts it, that the more reluctant we are to recognise overtly the importance of language; the more dangerous it can be (and is going to be used) as a tool of domination, both inside and outside pedagogic contexts. This, she says and I concur with her, is important because language is just too powerful a means of control to be ignored or set aside in the prime-controlling environment of pedagogic action (Hasan 1996: 383). Therefore, unless there are fundamental language policy and planning, socio-economic and attitudinal changes, parents will increasingly demand English as MOI, the risk of cultural erosion notwithstanding.

### **8.5: The effect of socio-economic status on rural and urban learners**

The conditions on the ground as analysed in Chapters Five and Six give a clear picture of what it means to live in either of the settings described therein. They show that living in the urban area is much better than living in the aggravated poverty which is characteristic of the rural areas. Most of the people living in the urban areas

have some form of employment, regardless of its nature, giving them some income. The results show that the urban people can at least afford providing scholastic materials, decent and enough food and medication and see that life at school is equally comfortable for their children. That is not the case for the rural population: many of them cannot afford a decent meal and they lack most of the social amenities. Many of them cannot provide the scholastic materials required by the school for their children. This greatly affects what goes on during the learning process of the two groups of learners. The effect is that the urban learners learn effectively, while the rural learners cannot learn effectively. The implication of this is that, unless some remedies are found to improve the conditions in the rural schools and homes, the gap between the rural and urban learners' performance is likely to continue widening.

#### **8.6: Cultural beliefs and socio-cultural factors**

Throughout this thesis I have pointed out that literacy is a social practice and that literacy practices are many and varied in nature and that they take place in a particular social context in which they derive meaning. This implies that particular literacy practices are appreciated in particular settings and yet even in those settings they will derive meanings in particular contexts. This strongly dictates the practices that take place within society. This has been evident in the fact that the literacy practices in urban areas vary from those that take place in the rural areas. As far as the reading and writing are concerned, many issues come into play, such as the education and the socio-economic levels of the adults in that setting. But there are practices such as interacting with adults that can help in developing skills like critical reasoning, inference and logical arguing of points. These are skills that are invaluable in education. I established that while the urban learners interact freely with adults including teachers and parents, the rural children are culture bound not to speak back to adults until they are bidden to do so which also rarely happens. The interaction with adults that takes place in urban areas exposes the children to a large quantity and

good quality of oral communication. This, coupled with the interaction with all the written texts they read, since they are surrounded with print, enables them to develop literacy practices, which are critical to the education process.

But the rural learners hardly interact with the written mode at home. Even the instructions they get from adults are oral. At school the reading materials are not enough for the enormous classes so that most of the instruction at school is also oral. All the examinations in Uganda are written. This implies yet another mismatch for the rural learners between the 'academic mode' and the 'instruction mode'. The lack of sufficient practice with the written mode inhibits the development of the writing skills, which are required by the education system and this affects the rural learners' performance negatively. Consequently they fail to perform as well as their urban counterparts.



The implication of this is that the urban learners get opportunity and time to discuss a wide range of academic topics and real life issues. This helps them in the development of supportive literacy practices and improves the discursive abilities that in the end become useful in their learning process. This kind of interaction is lacking among rural learners and this deficit curtails their learning process and renders it impossible for them to perform as well as the urban learners.

### **8.7: Values, attitude and ideologies and children's academic performance**

An exploration of the values, attitudes and ideologies of all respondents caused me to conclude that people in the Iganga district value education highly. From their responses about their attitudes and ideologies I realised that most of the people, even in rural areas, are willing to do their utmost best to see that their children succeed in

school. But most of the rural people are incapacitated by poverty. They cannot sufficiently facilitate their children's education. This implies that for the academic achievement gap to be narrowed something has to be done to alleviate poverty in the rural areas and to encourage the few who seem to be giving up, not to lose hope, as the attitudes of the parents influence those of their children.

It is also true that there are a few rural parents who seem not to know how they can help their children to ensure that they improve in school. These need to be enlightened and be made aware of what they can do even if it means just cooperating with the teachers and ensuring that their children get time to revise the notes they receive in class. Once all the stakeholders work together, their ideologies will be realised.

### **8.8: General Conclusion**



This study commenced based on several assumptions (see section 1.12). The pivot of the research was the literacy practices to which the learners are exposed, and how those literacy practices impact on their academic achievements. The foregoing conclusions indicate that literacy practices are social practices that are context specific, but that they are impacted upon by various factors, such as the education level of the adults involved with the learners, the socio-economic level prevailing in the setting and the academic infrastructure in place. It emerges clearly that the more educated the parents are the more they value education, as they bear in mind what their own education has done for them. It dictates how much effort they invest in their children's education. But how much is invested also depends on one's socio-economic status. That status provides the resources to be invested.

The general conclusion emanating from all this is that many of the urban parents have some resources and this enables them to put supportive literacy practices in place for

their children even before the children are able to read and write. And thus, growing up witnessing and experimenting with the world of print lays a strong foundation which proves vital to the development of the schooled literacy practices. The urban parents then make sure that they support the schools so that the schools also put in place an environment that is rich with literacy practices. Accessibility of printed material both at home and in school in the urban areas creates almost a perfect match between home and school, so that the urban learners have continuity as they enter school. On the other hand, the rural learners who have the mismatches discussed in Chapter Six, struggle with the transition between home and school. Thus, the urban environment fosters the learning process for the learners more than the rural environment. The result of all this is excellent academic achievements for the urban learners. The excellent academic achievements reward the urban learners with well paying jobs, but the vicious circle of impoverished literacy practices and socio-economic poverty continues for the rural learners.



On the other hand, in the rural areas the reverse happens. Living in impoverished homes, with uneducated parents, who know the value of education but failed to access it themselves and so cannot even help with homework and have no resources with which to put supportive literacy practices in place for their children, the rural learners have to go to school with barely enough scholastic materials. As the parents have no sources of income they cannot help the schools to put in place infrastructure that can facilitate maximum learning. Without supportive literacy practices both at home and in school, many a time learning on empty stomachs, being taught by impoverished and hungry teachers, in crowded classrooms, with very few textbooks and minimum exposure to the language of the academic discourse, the rural learners struggle to learn. The end result is poor grades at best and at worst dropping out of school without having achieved anything other than knowing that they were once in school. They end up with poor, low paying or casual jobs for the few who may be lucky to get any employment. If not they continue living in the vicious circle of poverty with no hope and ability of making life better for their own children.

Seeing that their failure to succeed in school condemns them to the kind of life they live those who manage to keep their children in school believe and wish that if only their children can be given fair access to the language of the academic discourse, maybe, they (the children) might achieve what the parents failed to do.

What comes out clearly is that urban literacy practices are linked to education, the job market and the global world, while the rural practices, where they exist, are rooted in the local conditions. The implication of this is that the local literacies can only become meaningful if enriched and linked to other more powerful practices such as those found in the urban areas. This means that to bridge the ever-widening achievement gap between the rural and urban learners a few things must be done. These are the ones I intend to give as recommendations in my next chapter.



## CHAPTER NINE

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 9.1: Introduction

This is the final chapter of an exploration of the role literacy practices play in the academic achievements of primary school learners. The endeavour aimed at establishing the impact of the literacy practices on the academic achievements of the rural and urban learners in the Iganga district in Uganda. Taking cognisance of the fact that rural learners perpetually perform poorer and poorer by every passing year while the urban learners perform very well (Uganda Government, 1992), an attempt has been made to analyse the literacy practices found in each setting and to examine the factors that affect the existing practices so that they either enhance or inhibit the learning process which learners undergo while in primary school. Aware that there may be many other factors that contribute to the rural learners' poor performance, the study envisaged that an analysis of the literacy practices in each setting would, to some extent, help to establish what can be done to help improve these learners' achievement grades and help increase their chances for breaking free from the vicious circle of knowledge deficiency and poverty. In this chapter I make some recommendations stemming from the conclusions given in the previous chapter and make some suggestions for further research.

#### 9.2: General recommendations

1. In agreement with NLS and based on the results of this study it is clear that acculturation into and development of supportive literacy practices start in the children's homes, but that they can only be meaningful if there are facilities in those homes to facilitate these processes. Therefore, there is a need for the

parents, especially those in the rural areas, to be informed of the types of facilities that they can put in place and the roles they can play to acculturate and help their children develop supportive literacy practices. Showing increased parental interest in the children's schoolwork can enhance their performance. This is likely to motivate the children into putting in more effort and it can, to some extent, improve the children's performance.

2. The conditions in the school greatly influence what happens in those schools. Sensitisation of the parents about this is essential. While the urban parents seem to have the resources and knowledge of what can be done to help and ensure the success of their children's education, most of the rural parents just do not know what to do to help their children. Yet from their attitudes and ideologies it is apparent that many of them have the will to try. Therefore, they should be sensitised about what they can do to improve the conditions in the rural schools, even if it means contributing in kind by taking off a day to go and make the bricks that can be used to construct more classrooms. This could, in the long run, reduce the congestion of learners in the classes. There is a lot the parents can do to help ease the situation in the rural schools even without contributing money.
3. There is a need to develop cooperation and a healthy working relationship between the two dichotomous settings. Such cooperation can lead to the stakeholders working together to help narrow the existing academic gap between the rural and urban learners. It could begin with the teachers and the learners from the rural schools visiting the urban schools to see what happens there and trying out some of the things they may think could help them improve. For example, this could involve borrowing the old newspapers and/or magazines which the urban learners have finished reading, so that the rural learners can have an experience with the world of print. This can improve the development of schooled literacy practices in the rural areas.

4. Given the general lack of printed materials in local languages in Uganda, the government needs to invest a bit more and see that something is done about the situation. Materials in local languages could be used to introduce the rural learners to the world of print and enable them to start off with the language with which they are already familiar. Linked with this is the perception that once a person speaks the language then that person can teach it, and in it (see Appendix C). This needs to be corrected so that if L1s are to be used in primary schools, the teachers get trained for the purpose so that they do the job well. However, in the face of globalisation and internationalisation of English, with the prospects inherent in its acquisition, such as having access to an abundance of information and knowledge, care should be taken to make sure that the rural children are introduced to and given sufficient access to the language of academic discourse and wider communication early enough.



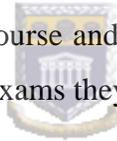
5. Uganda's language in education policy should be revised to make it less hegemonic than it appears to be at present. The policy needs to treat all the children equally to facilitate fair competition.

6. At present, there is a wide socio-economic disparity between most of the urban and the rural population. The poverty in the rural areas has immensely impacted on what takes place in the homes, the schools and on the learning process in general. The government needs to come up with measures to help the rural population uplift themselves from the abject poverty in which they live so that they can be in position to facilitate their children's learning processes. Other sources such as non-governmental organisations can also help.

7. Government should appreciate that the UPE has given rise to the number of learners in primary schools. This is fruition of its good intentions, which are

commendable. It should, therefore, provide learning and teaching materials and infrastructure to enable meaningful learning to take place.

8. Appreciating the fact that each society is deeply rooted in its own culture and that each culture has its own set of values, attitudes, customs, beliefs and ethics which makes it unique and adored by its owners, I also acknowledge the fact that culture is not static. Therefore, there is a need for the rural people to review their culture and identify some of the values, attitudes, customs, beliefs and ethics that could be detrimental to their children's education and try to modify them so that they are able to help their children to achieve maximally from school.
9. There is a need to address the mismatches that exist in the rural areas so that the learners can have sufficient quantity and quality exposure to both the language of the academic discourse and the written mode so that they can be more prepared for the written exams they have to do in English.



### **9.3: Further research**

Even though this study was based in the Iganga district, it has brought out crucial issues that are pertinent to the whole of Uganda. It has highlighted the plight of the rural learners and bearing in mind the fact that 88% of the country's population lives in rural areas, it becomes imperative that further research is done. I may not be in a position to give a comprehensive list of all the aspects that require investigation, but the following areas are some of those that need to be researched:

- An investigation of how the literacy practices in the rural areas can be increased and/or modified and how the teachers can utilise the present local literacy practices to enrich their teaching.

- A study that can highlight the ways in which all stakeholders, and specifically the urban population, can help the rural schools to improve their learners' performance with minimum costs.
- An investigation of how a bilingual education system can be effectively introduced in Uganda to benefit both the rural and the urban learners.
- An analysis of what can be done to make the rural schools more self-reliant and developmental than they are at present so that they can improve their infrastructure to make it more conducive to learning and teaching.
- An investigation into other factors that influence the academic achievements of the rural learners



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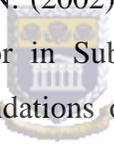


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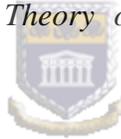
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## APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX A

#### GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWS WITH THE HEAD TEACHERS

1. How do you gauge your school's performance in the last two years?
2. What, in your opinion, has led to that kind of performance?
3. Briefly comment on the academic performance of the learners in the Iganga district
4. What do you think are the causes of the academic achievement imbalance that exists between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district?
5. How can the gap be bridged /reduced?
6. What are the literacy practices found in your school?
7. What does your school consider as the important literacy practices that should be developed among P 3 learners?  
What about among P 6 learners?  
Do these differ from those found in other schools? How?
8. What are some of the approaches used by your teachers to develop the learners' literacy practices?
9. In which way does the school administration ensure the development of these literacy practices?
10. How often do you organise literacy events such as debate in your school?  
What other activities does your school organise to ensure the development of literacy practices?
11. What challenges does your school administration face in the process of fostering the development of these literacy practices?
12. Do you have a library in your school? Is it well equipped? In what language(s) are the books in the library?
13. Are there language preferences as to which books and other materials teachers/learners read?

14. Do you think that the teachers use the library well? On the average how often do the teachers use the library for reference?
15. Please brief me on the availability of the teaching/learning materials such as textbooks class readers, etc. in your school. Who provides them?
16. How many teachers do you have on your staff? What are their qualifications?
17. How do you rate their abilities in handling the syllabus content in their classes?
18. Do the teachers interact with the learners outside the classroom? On what topics? In what language?
19. What is the medium of instruction (MOI) in your school? How comfortable are you with this MOI?
20. What are your views on the language in education policy (LEP)?
21. What are your ideologies on learners' academic achievement?
22. How involved are the parents in their children's education? Do they help them with homework? Do they encourage them to read and write at home?
23. Do they attend PTA meetings? How do you rate their participation, cooperative or unfriendly?
24. What recommendations can you make for the following people that could reduce the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district in Uganda?
  - a) Other head teachers
  - b) Teachers
  - c) Teacher trainers
  - d) Parents
  - e) Learners
  - f) Policy makers
25. Tell me poverty on the community and the primary school learners in the Iganga district.

## INTERVIEWS WITH THE HEAD TEACHERS

I interviewed the ten head teachers of the ten-selected school. Five schools were urban schools. These were selected according to the PLE results of 2002. The rural schools were selected with the help of the District Education Officer (DEO). These schools' performance in PLE was one of the major governing factors for their selection because like most of the rural schools they had persistently performed poorly. I have used 'HTR' to give the responses of the different head teachers. **HTR A**, **HTR B**, **HTR C** indicates head teacher of school A, B, C etc. Where the responses vary greatly I have given them independently and where they are similar I have grouped them as rural and urban responses to avoid a lot of repetitions.

### 1. The school's performance in the last two years

**HTR A** -The performance of this school has been very good not only in the last two years. For the last ten years the worst position we have held has been the 5<sup>th</sup> in the district. The head teacher said that in 2001 they were the third and the second 2002.

**HTR B** -The performance of this school has been very good. We are always in the best five.

**HTR C** said that the performance of this school is very good and has been so from the time the school started. "We are a very new and private school but we are doing very well. In 2001 and 2002 we have managed to be among the top five".

**HTR D** -Our performance has been excellent for long. For 2001 and 2002 were the best in the district.

**HTR E** -The performance of this school is very good. We are usually among the best ten. In 2001 and 2002 we managed to be among the top five.

**HTR F** -Our performance, as compared to the rest of the schools in the district, has not been all that good. But we are just trying to improve. We have registered a bit of improvement in the last two years, 2001 and 2002.

**HTRG** -The performance of this school is very poor. We hardly get any first grade passes in PLE. When we get any first grade it is only one or two in about two or three years. In 2001 and 2002 we did not get any first grades.

**HTR H** -The performance of this school is very poor. We have not got any first grade passes in PLE in the last seven years.

**HTR I** -The performance of this school is very poor. We do not get any first grade passes in PLE. Even the second grades we get are not many. Many of our candidates usually pass in third or fourth grades and some fail completely.

**HTR J** -The performance of this school is very poor. We only manage to get a few second grades, if any, most of our candidates usually pass in third or fourth grades and many fail completely.

## **2. Reasons for that kind of performance**

The head teachers from the **urban** schools gave the following as the factors responsible for the good performance in their schools.

- We have achieved so much because we are a good, committed, hardworking staff.
- The teachers stay at school for long hours teaching and giving a lot of remedial work to the weak ones.
- We have the facilities and we make good use of them. We have well furnished classrooms clean water and electricity so our learners study in a comfortable environment.
- We also have almost all the materials we need for each class. These include the textbooks, charts cards.
- Our parents are very co-operative. They pay the money we request them to pay and that makes us able to purchase whatever we need. The money they pay is used to buy more textbooks, exercise books, pens, pencils, charts and a lot of other equipment we deem necessary for the smooth running of the school.
- Using part of the money paid by the parents we feed the children well and we give the teachers good lunch so that they teach well in the afternoon sessions.
- We have endeavoured to provide accommodation in school or in the neighbourhood so that they can come to school as early as 7.00am, work long hours and then go home.
- We pay the teachers some money besides their salary and this enables them to meet some of their expenses. This motivates them into working hard for one reason among many that they can keep their jobs in these schools.
- We treat all the children equally, we do not believe in coaching others and leaving out others.
- We insist that English is used in the school and in the class so that all the learners can get along well with each other and with the staff. This also helps them to get the content taught in the LOE once and for all thus they have enough time to internalise it before

they sit exams. It saves a lot of time that would otherwise be spent in translating the content from one language to another.

In addition to the above **HTR B** said that the old boys of the school come and talk to the candidates to encourage and inspire them to work hard. He also said that the teachers try to be as close to the learners as they can. This enables them to understand the learners and handle them in the best way possible. In addition he said that the school council collects problems from the learners "...and we do our best to address them so that the learners are very comfortable."

**HTR C** added that she uses continuous assessment in her school. They score the weekend homework and this makes the learners work hard because the weekend marks are added to the test scores at the end of the term thus to get a good position at the end of term the learners have to work hard all through the term. She also said that she carries out research to find out the tricks the good schools use to make their learners perform well and she uses them too in her school.

School E is very big and most of the classes have two to three streams. **HTR E** said they have instilled a competitive spirit among the streams and this has helped to ensure that all learners' work had to keep their streams in the lead.

The head teachers from the **rural** schools gave the following as the factors responsible for the poor performance in their schools.



- Lack of co-ordination between teachers and parents.
- Big numbers of learners make class management difficult for the teachers.
- Poverty among the parents. They cannot pay any money to the schools. We have to do with what the government supplies.
- Unmotivated and discouraged staff. With the meagre salary and the widespread poverty the teachers have to find means of making ends meet. They resort to attending to their gardens before coming to school.
- Lack of facilities. We cannot create streams so the classes are overcrowded. Even the rooms have neither sufficient furniture, nor doors nor shutters. We cannot leave anything behind for the pupils to read in their own time.
- Many of the schools do not have staff houses and we cannot afford to rent for the teachers. They have to travel long distance to school. Some of them come late and start the teaching when they are already exhausted. In the afternoon they have to leave early on account of the long distances they have to travel.
- Distance from home to school affects the learners too. Many of them also come late and have to leave early to get home before nightfall.
- Many of the learners get to school when already exhausted, as they also have to do some domestic chores before coming to school.

- These schools have no sources of income and we cannot provide lunch for the teachers or for the learners. Those who come from near go for their lunch at home and when they do some of them come back late while other do not come back at all. Those who come from far do with such things as a piece of sugar cane, previous supper left-over carried to school or have to stay and study hungry till they go back home.
- Lack of sufficient materials. The govt sends some but they are very few compared to our enrolment but we cannot buy more for lack of funds.
- Uniformed or ignorant parents who do not know their roles and do not do what is required of them. Many learners come without exercise books, pens or pencils and end up just disturbing the few who bring those things.
- Large numbers of un-provided for orphans who come to school with almost nothing. They are overwhelmed by their state to the extent that many are absentminded in class. They have neither books nor pens and just watch others yet when exams come they also do and perform very poorly.

**HTR F** added that poor administration also contributes to the poor performance because his school has registered some improvement since 2001, the time he was transferred to that school. He said that some schools cannot improve with the same people in place. NB He is the only one in this group who had anything positive to add to the rather negative and resigned responses the rest of the rural head teachers had given.



### **3. Briefly comment on the academic performance of the learners in the Iganga district**

The response to this number was the same for all the ten head teachers. All of them said that only a few schools do well. These are just about ten. A few others try. But much as the district has over 300 schools all the rest perform poorly. The five **HTRS** of the urban schools added that there is a lot of lack of seriousness in rural schools.

### **4. The causes of the academic achievement imbalance that exists between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district**

Most of what had been given in number two above came up for this number but in addition the urban **HTRS** gave the following as factors contributing to the existing achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district.

- The teacher-pupil ratio fixed by govt makes many of the rural schools have very few teachers. The numbers of pupils in the classes are big and difficult to manage.

- High rate of absenteeism in rural schools for both the teachers and the learners. When the teachers are absent the pupils are not taught and a lot of time is wasted. When the pupils are absent they miss out on what is taught in their absence and many may not bother to find out what was taught while they were away.
- Lack of facilities in rural areas such as medical care. This in part explains the absenteeism. Many of the learners and the teachers do not get the necessary treatment in time and end up taking a long time to recover when they fall sick.
- There are no libraries in rural schools. The learners do not get enough exposure to books, thus they do not develop the vital reading skill early enough to enable them acquire extra knowledge in addition to the content they get in class from the print around them.
- In some schools, even the few materials supplied by govt are not used on grounds that they are not enough for the learners in a particular class.
- The urban schools are always competing in their performance but the rural schools lack the competitive spirit. They seem to be contented with their performance.
- Some rural schools do not have enough trained teachers. In such cases those employed by the district as licensed teachers are the S4 or S6 failures who have failed to join any institution and happen to live around or in the schools' neighbourhood. These lack the methodology and sometimes the content and sometimes they cannot teach effectively. In addition, most of the rural schools have very old teachers who have never had a refresher course since they left college decades ago and these continue using archaic methods which are long out of date and are no longer effective.
- The rural teachers remain in their cocoons and never step out to visit the good schools in effort to find out what makes the good schools perform well.
- The rural teachers wholly depend on their meagre salary, which is hardly enough to live on and they are de-motivated by the kind of life they lead.
- The persistent poor results further de-motivate the teachers and the pupils such that they do not see any reason for working harder.
- There is lack of co-operation between the staff and the administration in some schools. This creates a gap and mistrust. This is the reason why some head teachers lock up the textbooks and the teachers cannot access them once the head teacher is not in school.
- Lack of preparation on part of the teachers also results in poor performance as the ill prepared teacher ends up wasting a lot of time on unnecessary trivialities.
- Rural schools have a tendency of having the good teachers teach P 7 and the poor ones in P 1. This ruins the children's foundation, which becomes difficult to correct. In some cases the infant classes are left for the female

young teachers who are struggling to raise their own families. These have numerous problems associated with parenting and are usually absent and the young children are often left unattended to. This wastes their time and 'kills' their morale and some end up losing interest in school.

In addition the rural **HTRS** gave the following as factors contributing to the existing achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district.

- They said that the well-to-do parents who could have helped develop the rural schools have left the rural areas and opt to take their children to the urban schools and they have no regard for the rural schools.
- Out of poverty or will the rural parents have left everything to the govt. They do not intervene and the govt cannot afford to supply all the facilities and give all the infrastructure required thus the rural schools have to go without what the govt cannot give.
- The language policy mandates the rural schools to use L1s in lower classes and the teachers extend it to cover the whole primary school section.

### **5. Suggestions for bridging /reducing the achievement gap**

All the **HTRS** agreed that it requires finding permanent solutions to the problems listed above in numbers 2 and 4. They gave the following as some of the solutions. They said that there was need to educate and sensitise all the stakeholders involved. These include the parents, teachers, head teachers, and the learners. The **HTRS** advised that the gap could be reduced if the parents and the teachers are more committed to the schools' progress. They said that this could be achieved if:

- The rural teachers could visit the urban schools to find out how the urban teachers manage to make their learners perform well and do likewise to their learners.
- There is a change of attitude among the rural teachers and they believe that their learners can also do well so that they can work towards making the learners improve.
- The govt and the parents devise ways of motivating and persuading the rural teachers to put a lot more effort and time in their work.
- The rural parents get more involved in the education of their children. This implies that they pay some money to the schools, which would be used to address some of the multitude of problems the rural schools have.
- The rural parents should provide their children with the scholastic materials and feeding which the govt does not supply.
- There is co-operation between all the stakeholders so that the head teachers work together with the staff and those two work together with the parents.

- The district administrations resuscitate and intensify the monitoring of the rural schools through inspection.

## 6. The literacy practices found in the schools

**HTRS A, B, C, D and E** had the following in common:

- They have well stocked libraries in their schools. They also have many sets of supplementary readers for all the classes, which learners borrow and read.
- They provide newspapers daily for the learners to read.
- They engage their learners of all classes in debating at least once a week.
- The teachers carry out discussions with the learners. They discuss a variety of topics and plenty of the academic work.
- Learners are engaged in a wide range of reading and writing activities.

The **HTR** of **C, D and E** added that the learners in her school participate in drama and academic quizzes which they perform in English.

**HTR D** said that they also encourage their learners to do a lot of research and group discussions on a wide range of topics in all subjects.

**HTRS B and D** whose schools are boarding schools said that their learners watch TV and listen to radios on weekends. These two said that they have school magazines and their learners write the articles, which take up 95% of the magazines. They also write for the children's sections in the national newspapers.

*I saw copies of the magazines and the newspaper articles and they were impressive.*

**HTRS F, G, H, I, and J** had the following in common:

- Some of their learners read the few textbooks they have. The upper classes read *Young Talk* and *Straight Talk*, these are news supplements supplied by MOES to all schools.
- P 5 to P 7 have debate once a week. Each class conducts its own debate.
- They do not have TVs and radios in schools.

However, **HTR G** added that once in a while he buys newspapers and the interested learners read. While **HTR H** said teachers in his school write drama scripts and direct plays, which are acted by the learners.

## 7. The literacy practices that the HTRS consider as important, which could be developed among P 3 and P 6 learners in their schools.

**Do these differ from those found in other schools? If so, how?**

**HTR A** said that his school considers reading widely good for P 3. They give them plenty of graded supplementary readers and charts for incidental reading. They value a lot of interaction as in telling the news and they see doing a lot of exercises as also very important. To them watching TV and listening to radio and discussing the programs with adults and siblings are also vital.

- In P 6 they value, encourage and try their best to develop extensive and intensive reading skills.
- They also consider writing and revising notes important.
- In addition this **HTR** stressed that doing a lot of comprehension exercises, both oral and written, is also very important.
- In this school they are of the view that debate is a good literacy practice.
- **HTR A** said that discussion between the teachers and the learners is crucial.
- And so is active participation during the lessons.

**HTR A** said that the literacy practices in his school differ from those in other schools because each school has different way of looking at what is likely to bring excellent performance for their learners.

**HTR B** said that in his school they value and encourage P 3 to read widely. They should read and tell short stories so they give them plenty of graded supplementary readers and charts for incidental reading. They encourage a lot of interaction as in telling the news. They feel that plenty of oral and written quizzes, word puzzles and a lot of exercises as also very important for the P 3 learners.

**HTR B** advocated the following for P 6

- Extensive and intensive reading.
- Reading newspapers, magazines and studying maps.
- Writing and revising notes.
- Plenty of comprehension and summary writing exercises.
- Writing composition, magazine articles, letters and short stories.
- He said that discussion between the teachers and the learners and among learners is crucial.
- Plenty of organised debate on a wide range of topics.
- Watching TV, listening to radio programme and having serious discussions of the programmes.

**HTR B** said that the literacy practices in school B differ from those in other schools because school B lays emphasis on a variety of practices while other schools only care about teaching the content as put down in the syllabus.

**HTR C** said that as far as school C is concerned they value and encourage P 3 to read widely. They should read and tell short stories. They encourage a lot of interaction as in telling the news and role-play which should be done in a relaxed environment. They feel that plenty of oral and written quizzes, word puzzles and a lot of exercises as also very important for the P 3 learners.

**HTR C** advocated the following for P 6

- Extensive and intensive reading.
- Reading newspapers and studying maps.
- Drama
- Plenty of comprehension and summary writing exercises.
- Writing composition and short stories.
- They think that debate on a wide range of topics is a good literacy practice.
- She said that discussion between the teachers and the learners and among learners in groups is crucial.
- Watching TV, listening to radio academic programmes and having serious discussions of the programmes.
- Writing, reading and reciting poems.

What **HTRS D** and **E** gave was the same as **A, B** and **C** in as far as reading, and doing exercises and as for writing what **D** gave was just the same as **B**.

They all agreed that the literacy practices in the urban schools were alike but what differed was the way they conducted. They said that this was the case because they have similar goals and they liaise with each other.

**HTRS F, G, H, I** and **J** said that they consider the following to be vital literacy practices in P 3:

- Reading storybooks, textbooks, charts and cards.
- Writing /copying notes.
- Writing sentences about pictures.
- Debating even if it is in L1 (but none gave it as a practice in their schools).

For P 6 these **HTRS** stressed the following:

- Reading storybooks, textbooks, magazines and newspapers for those who can get them.
- Drama
- Doing plenty of writing exercises.
- Writing composition, short stories and official and personal letters.

- Doing a lot of tests
- Compulsory debate in English on a wide range of topics.
- Discussion between the teachers and the learners and in groups of learners is crucial.
- Listening to radio academic programmes and having serious discussions of the programmes
- Listening attentively to teachers in class.

These **HTRS** acknowledged that the literacy practices in their school differed from those in other schools especially the urban schools because of the large numbers of learners in the classes and the fact that they have very few of the reading materials. They said that the way these practices conducted also differed from one school to another.

#### **8. Some of the approaches used by your teachers to develop the learners' literacy practices**

The **HTRS** of the urban schools had the following in common:

- They said that the teachers in school endeavour to develop the literacy practices through constant practice.
- They ensure that the learners do a lot of oral and written exercises both in class and as homework.
- They have allocated time for and give a lot of extensive reading done during the library period.
- They find time for follow up activities on the story books the learners read. These include learners giving oral brief summaries to the other learners.
- They facilitate a lot of intensive reading during the English lessons in class.
- They make constructive comments on the learners' written exercises and ensure that the learners do corrections in accordance with the comments.
- Hanging up a lot of charts, card, and labelled pictures for incidental reading in lower classes and maps, newspaper and magazine cuttings, topic summaries, and labelled diagrams for the upper classes.
- The teachers endeavour to discuss a wide range of topics with the learners.
- Organise debates and drama at class level.

**HTR B** in addition gave the following:

- They encourage the learners to write news, draw cartoons and hung them on the notice boards inside and outside their classes and ask others to identify any mistakes there may be.
- They greatly encourage the learners to ask questions and endeavour to answer any questions the learners ask.

**HTR C** and **E** added that instilling and using competition is one approach that is used in their schools to develop the literacy practices. The two schools compete in activities like debate and drama.

**HTR D** added that his teachers allocate learners topic for research, which they do in the library and they discuss their findings with the whole class. This encourages wide and focused reading.

**HTRS B** and **D** encourage the learners to watch TV and listen to the radio and endeavour to discuss the programmes with them.

The **HTRS** of the rural schools had the following in common:

- They encourage wide reading though the books are few.
- They organise debate for the upper classes.
- They train the learners in letter writing.

**HTR H** added that the teachers in his school give the learners questions for researching and discussing in the class.

**HTR I** said that sometimes the teachers give homework though in most cases it is never done.

## **9. The ways in which the school administrations ensure that these literacy practices are developed**

**HTR A, B, C, D** and **E** said that they:

- Provide manila cards and other materials required by the teachers to make charts and reading cards, draw maps, diagrams etc.
- They pay teachers some top-up to motivate them so that they are more committed and therefore can stay longer in school and attend to the learners, have discussions with them, mark the many exercises they write, organise debates, quizzes and help those who have to do remedial work.
- Endeavour to provide accommodation for the teachers so that they stay near/in the school so that they stay longer at work.
- They buy more textbook and supplementary readers to make sure the pupils read comfortably.
- Make sure the libraries are accessible to both learners and the teachers.

In addition **HTR C** said she sets and administers quizzes on the supplementary readers herself while **HTR D** said that he makes it a point to attend the researched discussions and he fills in more information, adding to what the researcher gives and this motivates the learners to read even more widely.

The **HTRS** from the rural schools said they ensure the development of the literacy practices by:

- Availing the books and the *Young Talk* and *Straight Talk* the govt sends to schools to be used (though some of the other respondents had reports to the contrary).
- Supervising the teaching.

**HTR H** added that they buy prizes for the top three pupils in each class at the end of the year.

**10. The frequency and types of the literacy events such as debate that ensure the development of literacy practices in schools.**

**HTR A** said that debates are held in all classes every Wednesday afternoon.

There is news reading during the school assembly on Friday mornings. Here selected learners read the news they have compiled from the newspapers of that week.

The learners are encouraged to read as many novels and short stories as possible.

P 3 to P 5 learners have to give summaries of the books they have read to their classmates during the afternoon lessons on Fridays before they go to get other books from the library.

The P 1 and P 2 teachers ensure that telling the news is part of their teaching. They do a lot of story telling and let the children also tell stories,

School A also holds an Open Day once a year where the learners exhibit what they learn in all subjects and they discuss it with visitors, parents and their colleagues.

**HTR B** said that they have debates for every class on Sunday afternoons.

Some of the learners watch TV and video shows while others listen to radio on Saturdays. Teachers attend all these activities and they later discuss the programmes with the learners.

School B has a writers' club which meets three times a week. They discuss what has been written, edit the articles, organise the school magazines for printing, etc. Everybody is encouraged to become a member.

There is also a music dance and drama (MMD) club. This meets three times a week after classes and on selected Saturdays they entertain the school.

There is news reading during the school assembly on Friday and Monday mornings. Here selected learners from the upper classes read the news they have compiled from the newspapers of that week on Friday and selected learners read on Mondays.

**HTR C** said that they have debates for every class on Tuesday afternoons.

They hold drama rehearsal in the afternoons after classes and stage for the whole school once a month.

They take educational tours. Both the teachers and learners visit other schools and interact with the colleagues and learn from each other.

The learners are encouraged to read as widely as they can.

They let the learners view lessons that have been taped on videos and then discuss the lessons.



**HTR D** said that there is always news reading during the school assembly on Monday mornings. Here selected learners read the news they have compiled from the newspapers of the previous week.

He said that they have debates for every class on Sunday afternoons. It is a boarding school.

Like in school B some of the learners in school D watch TV and video shows while others listen to radio on Saturdays. The teachers who later discuss the programmes with the learners attend all these activities.

School D also has a writers' club which meets three times a week. They discuss what has been written, edit the articles, organise the school magazines for printing, etc. Everybody is encouraged to become a member.

They also have a drama club. This meets three times a week after classes and on selected Saturdays they entertain the school.

They take educational tours. Both the teachers and learners visit other schools and other sites of academic interest and interact with the colleagues and learn from each other.

School D also holds an Open Day once a year where the learners exhibit displays of what they learn in all subjects and they discuss it with visitors, parents and their colleagues.

They organise group discussions for the middle and upper classes so that they can discuss the subject content they have been taught as part of their revision.

**HTR E** said that they have debates for every class once a week but each class choose when to have theirs.

They take educational tours. Both the teachers and learners visit other schools and other sites of academic interest like the national shows and interact with the colleagues and learn from each other and from the other people they meet.

He also said that the sometimes organise public lectures. The speaker, the teachers and the learners then discuss the contents of these lectures in details.

They also have a drama club. This meets two times a week after classes and on selected days they entertain the school.

**HTRS F, G, H, I and J** said they have debate once a week. The teachers usually choose when to have it in their classes.



**HTRS F and I** said they have drama once a term and once a year respectively.

**HTR G** said that occasionally they organise general lectures on hygiene, the speaker, the teachers and the learners then discuss AIDS, discipline and the contents of these lectures in details.

## **11. The challenges the school administrations face in the process of fostering the development of these literacy practices**

**HTR A, B, D and E** said that since they are old well-established schools they do not have many challenges except that they have to spend more on buying books because their learners love reading so they must provide the books to be read. Time is another challenge they face and this limits the activities the learners get involved in because they must prepare well for the exams.

School C is a new and private school. The **HTR** said she faces several challenges including having to spend a lot of money on buying both textbooks and supplementary readers to make sure that the learners have what to read. The little assistance they get from govt is not enough.

As a new day school time is another challenge they face that limits the activities the learners get involved in because they must prepare well for the exams. She added that the teachers she has are too few to co-ordinate all the activities so they just do what they can and leave out a lot more they would have wished to do.

**HTR F, G, H, I and J** had the following challenges in common:

- Very few books for the large numbers in their schools.
- Education level of most of the parents impinges on their ability to guide/help their children.
- Poverty deters the parents from paying some money to the schools. This brings about lack of resources and a lot has to be left undone. They cannot even afford buying a copy of newspapers daily.
- Needy teachers have no morale to stay long in school to oversee such activities as drama or group discussions or prepare charts or cards notwithstanding the lack of fund to buy the required materials.
- Lateness and early departure makes school time is too short: 9:00 or 9:30 am to 3:30 or 4:00pm.
- Constant absenteeism by both pupils and the teachers.
- Permanent use of L1 by both the teachers and the learners make reading of the few books available difficult because they are in English.
- Lack of the reading culture among the learners, they cannot borrow even the few books available.
- The classrooms do not have shutter and doors they cannot hang up even the few charts and cards the govt supplies.

**HTRS I and J** had another serious challenge. Their schools are located in a rice growing area so the experience seasonal school attendance. The children must help to chase the birds from the rice fields. They sometimes stay away for as long as two months. By the time they return they have almost forgotten the little they had learnt.

**12. Library facilities in schools: are they well equipped? In what language(s) are the books in the library?**

**HTRS A, B, C, D** and E said they have libraries and *I saw them*. But HTR A said his is small for the population. It is well equipped with the teachers' reference books, textbooks, supplementary readers, a set of encyclopedia, a newspaper archive and many other books. Most of the books are in English; just a handful is in Luganda and none in Lusoga.

The library in school B was bigger than that of A though the **HTR** also said they are planning to expand it to cater for the demand. It had more books than that of A though they were of the same categories. This had Luganda newspapers as well.

School E was just like A and B with a well equipped library with almost all the books in English.

**HTR C** also said she is still stocking hers. I saw only a number of Luganda books but the rest were in English. It is also well equipped with the categories of books that schools A and B had, but had no encyclopaedia and no Luganda newspapers.

School D has the biggest library. It is very well equipped with a lot of books. I asked the **HTR** how he managed to get all the books and he said that most of them are donations from well-wishers of the school identified by old boys of the school. It has furniture enough to seat about seventy pupils at a time. Most of the books are in English, only thirteen of them in Luganda and none in Lusoga.

The **HTRS** of **F, G, H, I** and **J** all said they had bookstore working as their libraries. (*I saw all of them*).

For school F the bookstore was a small room and I learnt that the key to it is always kept in the headmaster's office. The **HTR** said that the books are taken to the classes during the reading lessons and returned at the end of the lesson. The books were all in English except just five for P 1 and P 2, which were in Luganda. The mother tongue of this area is Lusoga but there were no books written in Lusoga.

For schools G, H, I and J the bookstores were in the **HTRS** offices. The books in the rural schools were not as many as those in the urban schools. They were mainly textbooks, some class readers and very few reference books for the teachers. Most of these books showed no signs of usage 'looked newer than when they were brought to the schools'. Except for handfuls for P 1 and P 2, which were in Luganda the rest of the books were in English. None of these schools had a newspapers archive, not even of those supplied by govt.

Only **HTRS G** and **H** said they leave the keys with their deputies when they are out of school on a working day and their books showed signs of a bit of usage.

### **13. Teachers' and learners' language preferences for books and other materials they read**

Most of these libraries and bookstores had mainly English books. All the **HTRS** said that they preferred book in English. This was supported by the fact that even the schools, which could afford opted to buy only English books. The teachers and the learners had to go by the head teachers' preference.

However, school B had *Bukedde*, a Luganda newspaper but the librarian said that only one or two teacher show interest in it. On further probe I learnt that these are the oldest teachers in the school. "The pupils and most of the teachers only read bits of it

when they notice or hear someone saying that there is an interesting story in it,” the librarian said.

School D had thirteen books in Luganda but the librarian told me that one borrows them.

#### **14. Usage of the library by the teachers**

The **HTRS** the urban schools said all their teachers use the libraries very well. They go there very often and some of them leave the libraries very late at night. They have to do a lot of research “... because they must have a lot of facts for their subject content to keep the learners busy”.

The **HTRS** for the rural schools said that occasionally the teachers go the bookstores to borrow the books. They added that many of the teachers hardly borrow any books for lack of the time to read them.

#### **15. Availability of the teaching/learning materials such as textbooks class readers, etc. in schools and who provides them**

**HTRS A, B, D** and **E** said they have a lot of teaching/learning materials. They said that every class had enough and “... a bit of surplus”. They said that some are supplied by the govt but the schools buy a lot to supplement and make sure the classes have got enough. They added that some parents buy textbooks for their children and let them carry them to school and work from them and this increases the numbers of those left unused at any one moment.

Besides what was said by **HTRS A, B** and **E**, **HTR D** said that they got a lot of these materials from donations from NGOs who are friends of the school and the Old Boys of the school who donate money and insist that it should be used to buy such materials.

**HTR C** said since hers is a private school; she does not get a lot from the govt. The school buys all the materials using some of the money the parents pay as fees. She added that some parents buy textbooks for their children and let them carry them to school and work from them and this helps to raise the numbers of the books. As for the other materials she said the school buys everything.

**HTRS F, G, H, I** and **J** said they have some materials, which are used in their schools. But all of them emphasised that what they have is what has been supplied by the govt, which is not enough for all the learners since they have very high enrolment in their schools. They said that they cannot buy more because when the govt introduced UPE it stopped fees payment by the parents in all the purely UPE schools. They added that the money sent to schools for scholastic material is barely enough and the govt dictates how it should be used.

## 16. The number of teachers and their qualifications in each school

I compiled the HTRS' responses to this inquiry as shown in the table below and I included the enrolment just to show the teacher-learner ratio in the rural and urban schools.

**Table 1 shows the staff sizes, teachers' qualifications and the school enrolments for the schools used in this study.**

School	Total No of Trs	No of govt employ-ed teachers	Grad trs	Grade V	G 111 On upgrade course	Grade 111	Un-trained teachers	No of school employ-ed teachers	No of pupils
<b>A</b>	<b>14</b>	11	1	6	4	3	--	3	358
<b>B</b>	<b>20</b>	15	3	8	2	7	--	5	402
<b>C</b>	<b>13</b>	-	1	4	3	5	--	13	210
<b>D</b>	<b>40</b>	30	7	13	10	10	--	10	1400
<b>E</b>	<b>46</b>	34	10	16	14	6	--	12	1900
<b>F</b>	<b>10</b>	10	1	1	2	4	2	--	1005
<b>G</b>	<b>13</b>	13	-	2	3	5	3	--	1352
<b>H</b>	<b>11</b>	11	1	2	2	4	2	--	1165
<b>I</b>	<b>17</b>	17	1	2	2	8	4	--	1890
<b>J</b>	<b>8</b>	8	-	2	2	3	1	--	922

NB Grad trs = graduate teachers

## 17. The head teachers' comments about the teachers' abilities in handling the syllabus content in their classes

**HTRS A, B, C, D and E** said all their teachers are distinction and merit cases and are very competent to handle the syllabus content. "That is one of the reasons for the good performance in these schools." They added that since they pay the teachers well their schools are marketable and so they are very choosy when they are looking for whom to employ. "We liaise with the college administrations and they advise us."

The rural **HTRS** said that many of their teachers were able to handle the syllabus content. They said that some of the trained teachers were better than the others. They said that sometimes there are factors such as sickness and big problematic families, which affected the teachers' performance though there were also cases where some teachers just lacked commitment. They added that some untrained teachers sometimes do a good job though many of them needed a lot of help especially when they are just beginning to teach.

## **18. Teachers-learner (T-L) interaction outside the classroom. The topics and language**

The urban **HTRS** said that a lot of teacher-learner (T-L) interaction takes place in their schools. They said that by the nature of their job they have to interact with their learners. “We demand it of them, they have the time and the learners look for them so they have to interact with them.” They said that they interact about almost every thing including consultation about class work, giving them remedial help, explanations, social and personal issues, co-curricular matters, research on topics for discussions, TV and radio programmes, what they read in newspapers and anything else they may feel like discussing with a grown up person because we encourage them to be free to talk about anything with their teachers. They all said that the teachers use only English when talking to the learners.

The rural **HTRS** said that whenever they get time and opportunity their teachers also interact with their learners though time is not always available. They said that when the teachers can they discuss academic work, sports and games and when they want to send them on errands. However they said that it was rare. Most of the teachers tend to stay either in their classrooms or in the staffroom preparing their lessons or marking books. They said that when they do speak to the learners they use Lusoga and a little bit of English most of the time.

## **19. The medium of instruction (MOI) and how the HTRS feel about the MOI in their schools**

**HTRS A, B, D and E** said that the MOI in their schools is purely English and they are very comfortable with it. It is the only Language of communication in their schools.

**HTR C** said that in the lower classes P 1 and P 2 they use a bit of L1. “We tell the teachers to gauge. If the teacher sees that the learners are lost then they can translate because the learners must understand what is taught. But even in these classes we use a lot of English. By P 3 our learners have fully mastered both languages there we use only English. We are very comfortable with our arrangement.”

**HTR F** said that when he came to this school two years ago he found that MOI was almost purely L1 through out the school but he has tried to change that. Now English is used strictly from P 3. In lower they use a mixture of both L1 and English. He said they are very comfortable with that now though that was not the case when he first introduced the idea.

**HTRS G and H** said that they use both languages in upper classes, P 6 and P 7 but in the other classes they use mainly Lusoga because it is the one the learners understand. That is what they are comfortable with.

**HTR I and J** said they mainly use L1 and hardly any English in all the classes. They said they are not really comfortable because they think it is one of the reasons why their grades are poor but it is what the learners are comfortable with.

## **20. The HTRS' views on the language in education policy (LEP)**

**HTR A, B, C, D and E** said the language in education policy is fine for the urban schools because it simplifies their work. Most of the children come when they already know the language and they just fit in the subject content.

However, they said that much as they were aware that the children need to develop their L1s they also thought that they need to be introduced to LOE early enough. This can only happen if they have English as the MOI. "These children need to be taught to think in English fairly early to reduce the time spent on translation from one language to another especially during terminal exams," three of them reasoned. They said that they would not mind if the L1 would be the one to be taught as a subject. **HTRS D and E** also shared the view that the schools should be left free to choose which MOI they wanted to use.

**HTR F, G, H, I and J** said that the children needed to start with L2 as the MOI as this would bring about unity and fair competition countrywide. They said that the four years of L1 are too long. They said that the three years left for the learners to use English were too few to bring the rural learners at the same linguistic level with their urban counterparts in the LOE. All of them wondered why there should be a difference in MOI when all the children do the same papers at the end of the seven years of the primary cycle. They said that they strongly believed that the disparity between MOI and LOE in their schools could be one of the major factors impacting on their learners' academic achievements.

However they said that in P 1 and P 2 it was okay to use L1 as the learners are being inducted in the education process if they were not conversant with English. One of them, H put it clearly that "What bothers one is the length of time, the four formative years when most of the concepts are being introduced and thought is being developed. The four years are too many, at least one or two or a mixture of languages right from the start."

## **21. The HTRS' ideologies on learners' academic achievement**

The urban **HTRS** gave the following as their ideologies on the learners' academic achievements:

- Nothing is free; the learners must work hard to excel in national examinations.

- A lot of practice in form of exercises is vital. Learners should avoid being idle.
- Good grades are important from the start because they instil confidence and satisfy the ego of the learners making them to work even harder.
- There should be a wide range of teaching/learning materials to be used in the delivery of the content to enable the learners grasp the gist of what is being taught.
- The learners need comfortable physical and social environment for a lot of learning to take place. The more the learning takes place the better the academic achievement.
- MOI is very important. Where possible it should be the same as LOE. It is important that LOE is mastered.
- Discipline is a must both at home and at school.
- Excelling in school is a prerequisite to social and economic mobility.

The rural **HTRS** gave the following as their ideologies about the learners' academic achievement:

- The learners need to master the LOE and it should be the same as the MOI.
- Children should pass exams because success in school is the only key to social and economic mobility that can alleviate poverty.
- Govt should do more for the rural areas, should send more materials.
- Policies should be flexible, realistic and equitable to everybody.
- Academic achievement should bring about self-sustaining skills.
- The improvement of learners' academic achievement is possible if all the stakeholders who include parents, teachers, the govt and learners cooperate.
- The govt should do something about the poverty in rural areas as it incapacitates the parents. If they had more resources they would help the schools and their children and reduce the problems that impact on the academic achievement such as lack of exercise books, which partly limits the exercises the rural learners do.

**22. The parents' involvement in their children's education by helping them with homework encouraging them to read and write at home**

All the urban **HTRS** said that all their parents are greatly involved in their children's education. "They are very cooperative. Most of them help their children with homework personally. Those who are too busy to do that get other people to do it. The illiterate hire other people in their neighbourhood to do it for them. The bottom line is that they show a lot of interest," one of them (D) said.

They said that they stress the importance of reading and writing to the parents in their meetings with them and they were very hopeful that most of the parents encourage their children to read and write at home "... that is how the homework gets done."

The rural **HTRS** that their parents fall in four categories: those who are literate and are quite involved in their children's education much as they do not do much because of poverty. "You can see that they try their best because they want their children to be better than them. They help with homework when it is given." The second category is that of those who are a bit literate but they just do not care. "These say they see no possibility of their children going far because they will not afford the fees after the UPE. These may not provide the scholastic materials even when they can afford them.

They said that the majority of their parents are illiterate. But they said that these are also in two categories. "One category tries their best against all odds. These would try to get somebody to help with homework, be it an older sibling, a relative or somebody paid if they have a bit of money. Then there is the category of the illiterate who have given up completely. These do not get involved, they will do nothing to help with homework and they are not bothered whether the children go to school or not, if anything they prefer them to watch the rice field than 'waste time at school'. These also may not provide the scholastic materials even when they can afford them. These **HTRS** said that the rural parents do not encourage their children to read or write mainly for two reasons. One is the lack of materials to be read and the second is the scarcity of money to buy the writing materials. Another possible reason is that they do not envisage its importance.

About the homework these **HTRS** said some do not help with because they do not know what to do, others do not help because they do not have the time, while others say that the academic work is school work, to be done at school if any help is required then that is what teachers are paid for. "But we are trying to educate them I hope things will change over time," G said.

### **23. How parents relate with the schools e.g. by meetings PTA, their participation and whether they are cooperative or unfriendly**

The urban **HTRS** said that almost all their parents come for the PTA meetings and for the class days. On a class day the parents of a particular class come and meet the teacher of that class and discuss the progress of their children. They all said that the parents are very concerned and very friendly.

The rural **HTRS** had varying experiences. **HTR F** said that his attend the meetings and most are quite co-operative, '...as long as you do not ask them for money, they will listen'.

**HTR G** said that some attend but most are not interested. “Some feel it is wastage of time.” He said that some of those who attend are quiet friendly and helpful though some have an I-do not-care attitude. He also said “most of them do not want to hear anything to do with payment of money”.

**HTR H** said most of his parents rarely come and even the few who come are not very co-operative.

**HTR I** said that only a few come. “They only listen and go. When you try to get their ideas they tell you that the school authorities know best what should be done.”

**HTR J** said that very few come and “they come late and they leave soon after the meal.”

**24. The HTRS’ recommendations for the stakeholders that could reduce the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district in Uganda**

- a) Other head teachers
- b) Teachers
- c) Teacher trainers
- d) Parents
- e) Learners
- f) Policy makers



**a) Head teachers**

The urban **HTRS** made the following recommendation for their fellow head teachers:

- They should avail the scholastic materials required for effective teaching.
- They should visit and be ready to learn from others and they should make effort to do that. In that way the rural HTRS can get a lot from the urban HTRS.
- They should hold and attend other schools’ Open Days.
- They should sensitise the parents. They will learn gradually.
- They should encourage teachers to upgrade because they get refreshed and learn other more effective methods.
- They should be in school more often and monitor the teaching process more closely. This would help them appreciate the problems on the ground and seek ways of addressing them.
- Co-operate more with the staff.
- Teach also so that they can lead by example.
- They should trust and involve their deputies in the running of the schools.
- They should involve the staff in decision-making.

The rural **HTRS** had the following to offer their colleagues:

- They should visit and be ready to learn from other schools. In that way the rural HTRS can get a lot from the urban HTRS. They should also visit and facilitate learners and staff tours to shows and educational fairs.
- They should hold and attend other schools' Open Days as this creates room for both constructive criticism and advice.
- They should upgrade and encourage their teachers to do so too because they get refreshed and learn other more effective methods.
- They should avail the scholastic materials required for effective teaching
- Co-operate more with the staff, the learners and the parents.
- Be aware of the social and economic needs in the community and advise the parents and their colleagues on how to overcome them.
- Talk to the staff and the learners about the importance of working hard.
- They should be in school more often and monitor the teaching process more closely. This would help them appreciate the problems on the ground and seek ways of addressing them.
- Find ways and means of providing lunch for the teachers and the learners to improve on the afternoon lessons.
- Find ways of involving the parents e.g. in constructing simple teachers' houses in the school.
- Teach also so that they can lead by example.
- They should trust and involve their deputies in the running of the schools.
- They should involve the staff in decision-making.

#### b) Teachers

For the teachers the urban **HTRS** made the following recommendations. They should:

- Love their job, be committed and put in all effort to perform it diligently.
- Be tolerant and try as much as possible to be self-reliant.
- Be ready to upgrade and undertake refresher courses.
- Do a lot of research to update their content before going to class, prepare the lessons well.
- Vary the teaching methods as much as possible.
- Use a lot of learning/teaching materials, be resourceful and be ready to improvise using the environment.
- Mark the books and do a lot of serious remedial work.
- Co-operate with the school administration, fellow teachers, parents, the community and the learners.
- Visit, be ready to learn and copy the good from other schools.

The rural **HTRS** gave the following recommendations for the teachers. They said the teachers should:

- Be ready to upgrade and undertake refresher courses.
- Love their job, be committed and put in all effort to perform it diligently.
- Reduce absenteeism and try to be punctual and stay longer in school to help the learners.
- Follow and endeavour to complete the syllabus.
- Be ready to do a lot of research to update their content before going to class, prepare the lessons well.
- Use a lot of learning/teaching materials, be resourceful and be ready to improvise using the environment.
- Mark the books and do a lot of serious remedial work.
- Visit, be ready to learn and copy the good from other schools and consult and seek guidance when you need it.
- Involve the parents show them how they can help their children especially with homework.
- Co-operate with the school administration, fellow teachers, parents, the community and the learners.

#### c) **Teacher trainers**

The recommendations made by the rural and urban **HTRS** were almost the same. All the head teachers said that there was need for the teacher trainers to do the following:

- To be more committed and work diligently.
- Be ready to upgrade and undertake refresher courses.
- Analyse the curriculum and ensure that the content is pass on to the trainees.
- Follow and cover the syllabus.
- Equip the teacher trainees with sufficient teaching methodology.
- Encourage practical and give a lot of demonstration lessons to their trainees.
- Increase school practice time and intensify the supervision to give more guidance to the trainees.
- Monitor and supervise the teachers in the field at least through the probation period.
- Try and instil diligence and morals more especially by example.
- Equip the trainees with life skills, which will enable them, survive in the field comfortably.
- Organise workshops, seminars and refresher courses for the teachers to rejuvenate their methods of teaching.

#### d) **Parents**

The recommendations made by the rural and urban **HTRS** were almost the same. All the head teachers were of the view that the parents needed to do the following:

- Co-operate with the school administration and the teachers on the academic and discipline matters of their children.
- Invest in the education of their children at least by providing them with the scholastic requirements.
- Be interested in their children's performance and check on their progress at school.
- Take the advice given during sensitising sessions and act upon it.
- Try and impart literacy practices by buying reading and writing materials, newspapers and get the homework done. Give the children time to do it and do what you can to help them.
- Talk to the children, encourage them, show them that you care about their progress and you want them to do well in school.
- Visit the schools and get involved in the school activities and advise the administration and the teachers.

#### e) Learners

These are the recommendations **HTRS** offered for the learners. They were the same for both the rural and the urban **HTRS**. They said the learners should:

- Be ready to work hard.
- Be disciplined and focused.
- Listen to and take the constructive advice given them by teachers, head teacher, parents and the community.
- Avoid being idle and use their time wisely to read textbooks and revise their notes.
- Consult the teachers and other knowledgeable people so that they can internalise the content they get in class.

#### f) Policy makers

Both the rural and urban **HTRS** gave similar recommendations. They said the policy makers need to:

- Be professionals who understand the implications of the policies they make.
- Visit the schools at the grassroots and assess what is on the ground before making policies.
- Make fair and equitable policies.
- Consult all categories of stakeholders and the policy implementers before passing the policies.
- Sensitise the population about the policies they make.

- Make functional and considerate policies, e.g. about the teacher-pupil ratio in a class.
- Avoid extreme generalisations.
- Try and address the problems that affect the education process e.g. by organising workshops to find out why some schools are not performing well.
- After a period of implementation they should survey to see how successful their policies have been or how they have impacted on the system.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS**

1. The performance of the selected schools in this study as viewed by the teachers
2. Factors responsible for the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district.
3. Suggestions for bridging/narrowing the gap in the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga districts
4. Literacy practices that the learners engage in while in class
5. Availability and use of the class library
6. Provision and availability of teaching/learning materials in schools
7. The activities used by teachers to develop literacy practices and how they are organised out of the class but in the schools
8. Learners' participation in class through asking/answering questions and the languages they use
9. Literacy practices/academic activities in which the learners are involved in rural and urban communities
10. Similarities or differences in the ways the rural and urban teachers handle/teach their learners and why the differences/similarities
11. The mediums of instruction (MOI) in the target classes

- 12.** The impact of the MOI on the learners' achievement in exams especially in PLE
- 13.** The MOI teachers prefer and why
- 14.** The teachers' views on Uganda's language in education policy(LEP)
- 15.** The impact of high/lack exposure to literacy events in English (such as watching TV, watching drama or listening to radio programmes) on the learners' achievements in academic tasks
- 16.** The teachers' expectations from the parents in the process of their children's education
- 17.** The teachers' recommendations of what various categories of people should do to reduce the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in Uganda
- 18.** Tell me about the effect of poverty on the community and the primary school learners in the Iganga district.



## INTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS

### 1. The performance of the schools in this study as viewed by the teachers

I interviewed the P 3 and P 6 teachers in the schools involved in the study. These classes were selected because while in urban schools all classes use English as MOI in the rural areas P 1 to P 4 are supposed to use L1s and then English is supposed to be used from P 5 onwards.

I sought to know how the performance of the selected schools compared with that of the other schools in the district.

All the teachers from the urban schools were happy with their performance as they had all been among the best five in 2002 PLE exams. It was only schools C and E who had been 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in 2001. This means that all the urban schools were performing well and were happy about it.

This was not the case for the rural schools. Teachers in school F said that their school had been performing poorly but they got a new headmaster at the beginning of 2001 and that they had started improving. Their grades in 2002 showed a remarkable positive change.

Teachers from school G said that they are trying their best but their grades were still very poor. The P 6 teacher said, “We are trying our best but we have a long way to go. We have befriended one of the good schools and hope to benefit a lot from the relationship.”

The teachers from schools H, I and J were not happy about their performance. All of them said they cannot compare their schools with other schools “because we have not even got any candidate passing with a first grade for years,” one teacher bemoaned.

### 2. Factors responsible for the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in the Iganga district.

Below is the summary of what the teachers gave as the factors responsible for the imbalance between the two areas.

The urban teachers said it is because of the:

- The difference in the socio-economic status between the two groups of people. Life in the two areas is completely different.
- The urban parents have sources of income and are more co-operative. They pay money to the schools and provide the scholastic materials for their children and see that homework is done. Most of the rural parents

have no sources of income whatsoever and some of them are illiterate they are not in position to help with homework even if it were taken home.

- The urban schools have better facilities and resources.
- The urban schools pay some money to their teachers; this is an incentive that lures all categories of teachers to seek employment in these schools. This enables the head teachers to select those they consider to be good. Once taken on these teachers work diligently to make sure they do not lose their jobs. Thus the motivated and hardworking teachers in the urban schools do better work than the de-motivated and lax teachers in the rural schools.
- The urban teachers seek and use newer methods but the rural teachers hardly have the time and impetus to do that.
- The presence of teaching/learning materials in the urban schools and the lack of them in the rural schools. This makes teaching and learning to be more learner-centred and more meaningful to the learners in urban schools than the teacher-centred learning in rural schools.
- The rural classes are over-populated but the urban classes have fewer learners.
- The urban teachers are housed in or near the school. They get to class early and stay longer in school helping the learners. This enables them to cover the syllabus but the rural teachers have to walk long distances to and from schools. They reach school when they are tired and have to leave early to get home before dusk. Most of them find it hard to cover the syllabus.
- The difference in the teachers' welfare at school. The urban teachers get tea and lunch at school, the rural teachers do not. Working when hungry, tired and distressed the rural teachers are not in position to do a job as good as the urban teachers do.
- The urban teachers and learners have more exposure to sources of information such as books and the mass media. This makes them more knowledgeable than the rural teachers and learner who lack that kind of access.
- The rural schools have fewer teachers, some of whom are untrained, because they cannot employ more like the urban schools do.
- Lack of or little supervision and inspection especially in rural schools give the teachers a leeway to do very little work in school. (*I learnt that most head teachers are hardly in school.*)
- There is remarkable competition among urban schools, which drives all the stakeholders into working hard to do their part. Most of the stakeholders in rural schools are complacent.
- While a big percentage of the urban population is educated and successful and is good model and inspiration to the learners which the rural population is not hence the urban learners are more exposed, more focused and more targeted learners than their rural counterparts.

- There is a higher rate of absenteeism among the rural teachers and learners than among their urban counterparts.
- Almost all of the urban parents use English at home to give their children a head start in schoolwork but the rural parents use their first languages, which are different from the LOE.
- The MOI is the same as the LOE in urban schools but in the rural schools the two differ greatly.
- The literacy practices in urban schools are more supportive than those in rural schools.
- Large rural families; most of them have taken on orphans which has made their loads bigger and heavier than they can efficiently support aggravating their impoverished status.

**Suggestions for bridging/narrowing the gap in the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in Iganga districts**

The urban teachers suggested that:

- Let all the stakeholders play their roles e.g. parents providing the scholastic materials required of them and all teachers teaching diligently.
- Govt and administration in rural school should find ways of motivating the teachers and the learners.
- Devise ways and means of providing lunch for teachers and learners and accommodation for the teachers near the schools.
- MOI should be English for all the schools.
- Organise refresher courses, seminars and workshops for the teachers to rejuvenate their teaching methods and equip them with other new and more effective ones.
- Employ more teachers in rural schools in order to reduce the teacher-learner ratio and ease the teachers' work.
- Facilitate the rural schools to improve the amenities in their schools so that they can build more classrooms for the ever-growing numbers of pupils, let the classes have sufficient furniture, doors and shutters so that they can be safe for the teachers to leave behind materials that could boost the development of the learners' literacy practices.
- The govt and the rural schools should devise ways of increasing the literacy materials such as the text books, newspapers, magazines so that the learners can have more access to and benefit from them.
- There is need to improve the working relationships between all the stakeholders i.e. the head teachers, teachers, parents, inspector of schools and the learners, so that they can all work together for a common goal of improving the academic achievements of all the children in the primary schools in the district.

- The rural teachers should try and find out how the urban teachers work and work hand in hand with them in a bid to improve their own work.
- The rural learners should love school, be ready to work hard, develop a culture of extensive reading and learn to discuss what they are taught with their teachers and colleagues.

The rural teachers agreed with what the urban teachers had suggested but they added the following:

- There is need for head teachers to be in school more often than most of them do so that they can supervise what goes on in school and avail the books supplied by the govt so that they can be used instead of being locked up.
- There is need to reduce absenteeism on the part of the teachers and the learners so that teaching and learning can be more consistent.
- The teachers should endeavour to complete the syllabi in all classes so that there are no knowledge gaps which might impact on the learners' performance in exams.
- The rural teachers should try and initiate and develop class libraries even if it means starting with old newspapers as long as the learners can read.
- A lot needs to be done to sensitise the parents on finding ways and means to alleviate poverty so that they can play their roles, such as providing scholastic materials, time and other facilities for their children's home study especially on weekends and during weekends.
- Everybody in position such as govt and NGO should do their utmost to help the orphans with counselling and provision of material support so that they can stay in and benefit from school.

### 3. Literacy practices that the learners engage in while in class

Table I shows the literacy practices P 3 urban and P 3 rural learners engage in while in class

Literacy practices for P 3 urban learners	Literacy practices for P 3 rural learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate in English once a week.</li> <li>• Story telling in English- once a week.</li> <li>• Telling the news in English – three times a week for A, C and E and once a week for B and D.</li> <li>• Doing a lot of exercises in all subjects -every day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate in L1 occasionally.</li> <li>• Story telling in L1 -three times a week</li> <li>• Telling the news using L1-everyday</li> <li>• Doing a few numbers in exercises mainly during English and Maths lessons -everyday</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing notes -daily.</li> <li>• Talking about and writing sentences pictures – almost daily.</li> <li>• Reading story books - once a week.</li> <li>• Reading/revising notes - almost daily.</li> <li>• Reading newspapers specifically the <i>Children’s Vision</i> and <i>Children’s Monitor</i>.-almost daily.</li> <li>• Quizzes –very often.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing down a few points in SST and Science -whenever there is a lesson</li> <li>• Reading/revising notes -could not tell</li> <li>• Reading text and story books once in a while (reported only in 3 schools but said the books are too few and only a few pupils show interest).</li> <li>• Writing sentences about pictures - occasionally</li> </ul>
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**Table 2 shows the literacy practices P 6 urban and P 6 rural learners engage in while in class**

<b>Literacy practices for P 6 urban learners</b>	<b>Literacy practices for P 6 rural learners</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate once a week.</li> <li>• Intensive and extensive reading comprehension activities in class and in library for class work -almost daily</li> <li>• Reading novels, newspapers, brochures and magazines -daily</li> <li>• Library research and revising notes –a great deal</li> <li>• Write a lot of exercises in all subjects. Daily</li> <li>• Writing articles for newspapers and school magazines (two schools) - attend writers’ club thrice a week.</li> <li>• Letter writing -taught</li> <li>• Reciting poems -quite often</li> <li>• Plenty of discussions with teachers and colleagues in and outside the classes.</li> <li>• Guided group discussions -commonly used in class.</li> <li>• Academic quizzes within the classes and with other P 6 classes in the same school or with other school -monthly</li> <li>• Reporting news reviews to the whole school –once a week</li> <li>• Participate in drama.</li> <li>• Watching TV and discussing what</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate once a week (one school), once a fortnight (one school), for the other three schools at the teacher’s convenience.</li> <li>• Read only govt-supplied newspapers <i>Young Talk</i> and <i>Straight Talk</i>. (One school reported that once in a while the HTR brings <i>New Vision</i> around)</li> <li>• Revising notes -Teacher could not tell.</li> <li>• Write some exercises mainly during English and Maths lessons -everyday</li> <li>• Writing some notes during SST and Science lessons -three times a week during the lessons.</li> <li>• The teachers said they teach them to write letters but they were not sure whether they actually write any afterwards.</li> <li>• One teacher reported organising class drama -once in a while.</li> </ul>

they see with colleague, teachers, parents and other children.	
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#### 4. Availability and use of the class library

I asked the teachers whether they had class libraries for their classes, I wanted to know how often the learners used these libraries and how the teachers checked to find out whether the books borrowed were actually read. I discovered that there were no specific class libraries but the P 3 teachers from the urban schools go to their school libraries and select books they think suitable for their learners and bring them to class at least one afternoon each week and let them read. The P 3 teacher of school D said that in addition to this they let their P 3 learners visit the school library in the evening so that they can 'have the feel of using the library as they see the older learners using it'.

All the P 3 urban teachers said they check on the reading by asking oral questions about the books when the learners report that they have completed reading a certain book. They also organise story telling sessions whereby learners tell their friends the parts of the books that they enjoyed most.

All the P 6 urban teachers except the one of school D also said they go and select the books from their libraries for their learners and bring them to class. They lend them out and each learner is free to return the book when they finish reading or they have to renew the borrowing after one week and keep it for one other week. They said they ask them oral questions about the books and also to write brief summaries about the books.

The P 6 teacher for school D said they send their learners to the school library but they record the books their learners borrow and ask them to briefly narrate the story to the teachers and to write down the summaries. "Some times a group that has read a particular book may choose to role play a section of that book to the rest of the class."

The P 6 rural teachers had no class libraries and only the ones of schools G and H select some books from those the govt has supplied and give them to the children to read but they conceded that they do not do anything to really check whether the books have been read.

The P 3 rural teachers said they had no class libraries and they did not bother to bring the books to the learners because 'they cannot read on their own and understand anything.' Those of G and H said they bring the books in at least one lesson a week and read together with the learners. They ask a few oral questions as a way of checking whether the learners have understood

*I witnessed on such reading. The teacher reads and the whole class reads after him in chorus. Since he is busy reading he cannot check to see who is reading and who is not as long as he can hear them repeat what he has read. Many of them were busy doing a lot of other things.*

## **5. Provision and availability of teaching/learning materials in schools**

I wanted to find out whether the teachers had enough teaching/learning materials such as text books, charts, cards visual objects, etc. in their classes.

All the P 3 and P 6 teachers in schools **A, B, D** and **E** said they have a lot of teaching/learning materials. They said that every class had enough and "... a bit of surplus". They said that some are supplied by the govt but the schools buy a lot to supplement and make sure the classes have got enough. They added that some parents buy text books for their children and let them carry those books to school and work from them and this increases the numbers of those left unused at any one moment.

The teachers in school **D** said that they got a lot of materials from donations from NGOs who are friends of the school and the Old Boys of the school who donate money and insist that it should be used to buy such materials.

The teachers of school **C** said that since theirs is a private school; they do not get a lot from the govt. The school buys all the materials using some of the money the parents pay as fees. They added that some parents buy textbooks for their children and let them carry the books to school and work from them and this helps to raise the numbers of the books. They said they have materials supplied by the school and they teach very comfortably.

The teacher from schools **F, G, H, I** and **J** said they have some materials, which are used in their schools. But all of them emphasised that what they have is what has been supplied by the govt that is not enough for all the learners since they have very high enrolment in their schools. They said that their schools cannot buy more because when the govt introduced UPE it stopped fees payment by the parents in all the purely UPE schools. They added that the money sent to schools for scholastic material is barely enough and the govt dictates how it should be used.

## **6. The activities used by teachers to develop literacy practices and how they are organised out of the class but in the schools**

**Table 3 show the various activities teachers in the different schools use to develop literacy practices in their classes**

School	P 3	P 6
<b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drama once a month</li> <li>• Quizzes with the other P 3 streams. - Twice a month</li> <li>• Reading notice boards and newspapers specifically the <i>Children's Vision</i> and <i>Children's Monitor</i> -almost daily.</li> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers and peers.</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - everyday</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drama –once a month.</li> <li>• Go to the library and read seriously- whenever they want.</li> <li>• Reading notice boards and newspapers -almost daily</li> <li>• Revise their notes- almost daily.</li> <li>• Debate with other schools whenever there is an opportunity.</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - everyday</li> <li>• Read the books borrowed from the library.</li> <li>• There are lots of maps and chart on the exterior walls of the classrooms and those constructed on the ground which learners study during their free time.</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate –occasionally with the other P 3 stream.</li> <li>• Writing letters in English.</li> <li>• Reading notice boards and newspapers specifically the <i>Children's Vision</i> and <i>Children's Monitor</i> -almost daily.</li> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers and peers- in most evenings.</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - everyday</li> <li>• Watching TV and discussing what they see with colleague, teachers, parents and older children – on weekends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers and peers - in most evenings</li> <li>• Reading notice boards and newspapers -almost daily</li> <li>• Revise their notes - almost daily.</li> <li>• Debate with other streams quite often.</li> <li>• Writing letters in English to parents and siblings - Often.</li> <li>• Writer's club meets thrice a week. They write articles for school magazines and newspapers</li> <li>• Read the books borrowed from the library.</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - everyday</li> <li>• There are lots of maps and chart on the exterior walls of the classrooms and those constructed on the ground which learners study during their free time.</li> <li>• Watching TV and discussing what they see with colleague, teachers, parents and older children – on</li> </ul>

		weekends
<b>C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate –occasionally with the other P 3 streams.</li> <li>• Quizzes with the other P 3 streams -quite often.</li> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers and peers- in most evenings.</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - everyday.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library research and revising notes –a great deal.</li> <li>• Reading notice boards and newspapers -almost daily.</li> <li>• There are lots of maps and chart on the exterior walls of the classrooms and those constructed on the ground which learners study during their free time.</li> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers and peers - in most evenings.</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - everyday.</li> <li>• Read the books borrowed from the library</li> <li>• Revise their notes- almost daily</li> </ul>
<b>D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drama club meets thrice a week.</li> <li>• Writer’s club meets thrice a week.</li> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers and peers - in most evenings.</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - Everyday.</li> <li>• Go to the library and look through books, some actually read seriously -whenever they want in the evenings.</li> <li>• Watching TV and discussing what they see with colleague and teachers -weekends</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching TV and discussing what they see with colleague and teachers -weekends</li> <li>• Library research and revising notes –a great deal.</li> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers and peers - in most evenings.</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - everyday</li> <li>• Writing letters in English to parents and siblings. -Regularly.</li> <li>• Read the books borrowed from the library.</li> <li>• Reading notice boards and newspapers -almost daily.</li> <li>• There are lots of maps and chart on the exterior walls of the classrooms and those constructed on the ground which learners study during their free time.</li> <li>• Writer’s club meets thrice a week. They write articles for school magazines and newspapers.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise their notes - almost daily</li> </ul>
<b>E</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do homework exercises - everyday.</li> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers, parents and peers- in most evenings</li> <li>• Debate –occasionally with the other P 3 streams.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the books borrowed from the library.</li> <li>• Reading notice boards and newspapers -almost daily</li> <li>• Do homework exercises - Everyday.</li> <li>• Discuss the subject content with the teachers, parents and peers - in most evenings</li> <li>• Debate –once a month with the other P 6 streams.</li> <li>• Quizzes with the other P 6 streams weekly and other schools -quite often.</li> <li>• Revise their notes- almost daily.</li> <li>• There are lots of maps and chart on the exterior walls of the classrooms and those constructed on the ground which learners study during their free time.</li> </ul>
<b>F</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardly anything.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate with other schools - once in a while.</li> <li>• Read newspapers <i>Young Talk</i> and <i>Straight Talk</i> – twice a month.</li> <li>• Sometimes chat with peers about the subject content but rarely.</li> <li>• Revise their notes - when they are about to do exams.</li> </ul>
<b>G</b>	Same as F	Same as F
<b>H</b>	Same as F	Same as F
<b>I</b>	Same as F	Same as F
<b>J</b>	Same as F	Same as F

### 7. Learners' participation in class through asking/answering questions and the languages they use

All the urban school teachers said that their learners participate freely in class. They ask questions, seek clarification give their opinions and challenge fellow colleagues'

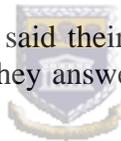
contributions they think not to be right. They answer all the questions asked by their teachers and their colleagues and explain themselves very well. They do all that in English both in and outside the class.

The P 3 teacher in school F said that the learners try their best to answer the asked questions but some of them are shy, “the shy ones fear to be laughed at by the rest.” These learners, the teacher added “hardly ask any questions, when they have not understood they prefer consulting with each other, other than putting up their hands to ask the teacher.” This teacher said that they use both English and/but mainly L1 in the class.

The P 6 teacher in F said that some of his learners are also shy ‘especially the girls’ But most of them try to answer the question asked them but hardly ask any. ‘A few still use L1 but we are trying to discourage that and encourage them to use English as much as possible’.

The P 6 teachers in G, H, I and J said that some of their learners try to answer the questions ‘especially the boys, the girls are usually quiet in class.’ It is unusual for the learners to ask question. Only a few do once in a while. These teachers said that most of the time the learners use Lusoga. “But we try to encourage them to use English”.

All the P 3 teachers in G, H, I and J said their learners try to answer the questions asked ‘but with a lot of prompting’, they answer in Lusoga and hardly ever ask any questions themselves.



### **8. Literacy practices/academic activities in which the learners are involved in rural and urban communities**

**Table 4 shows the literacy activities in which the learners are involved in rural and urban communities**

<b>Literacy practices in urban community</b>	<b>Literacy practices in rural community</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read newspapers, magazines and brochures.</li> <li>• Read adverts on walls, billboards etc.</li> <li>• Read labels on food and medicine packs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise their notes.</li> <li>• A few occasionally discuss their academic work with colleagues.</li> <li>• A few may borrow and read some of the textbooks.</li> <li>• Once in awhile they may do a bit</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit public libraries, borrow and read the books.</li> <li>• Some go to theatre and watch plays acted in English.</li> <li>• Revise their notes.</li> <li>• Read and work from the textbooks.</li> <li>• Do a lot of homework given by the teachers and organised by the parents.</li> <li>• Discuss their academic work with colleagues and parents.</li> <li>• Read books from their home libraries.</li> <li>• Make, cost and use shopping lists.</li> <li>• Some write letters to friends and colleagues.</li> <li>• Watch TV and films and discuss the programmes with the people around them e.g. parents and siblings.</li> <li>• Listen to radio programmes in English and discuss them with the people around them e.g. parents and siblings</li> </ul>	<p>of homework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few may get a chance to read a newspaper once in a while</li> </ul>
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**9. Similarities or differences in the ways the rural and urban teachers handle/teach their learners and why the differences/similarities**

In this item I sought to establish whether there was any difference in the way the urban and the rural teachers handle and/or teach their learners. All the teachers conceded that there were vast differences between the ways the urban and the rural teachers handle their learners. This has been reflected in the tables below.

**Table 5 shows the differences between the ways urban and rural teachers handle/teach their learners**

How the P 3 urban teachers handle their learners	How the P 3 rural teachers handle their learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use English as MOI.</li> <li>• Have fewer learners so they know and care for them individually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Lusoga as MOI.</li> <li>• Have many learners: they find it difficult to know and care for them</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They give them a lot of attention.</li> <li>• Give them a lot of exercises which they mark, give feedback and do remedial whenever necessary.</li> <li>• They test their learners frequently; this makes them get used to exam environment- no exam scare/fever.</li> <li>• Have a lot of materials, plan well and their lessons are more learner-centred.</li> <li>• Teachers stay longer and chat with their learners about subject content and other issues; both feel relaxed and close to each other.</li> <li>• They cover the syllabus.</li> <li>• Do a lot of research, teach well and give plenty of notes.</li> <li>• Have better facilities e.g. secure classrooms they leave lots of charts and cards for learners to read on their own.</li> </ul>	<p>individually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give them a very few exercises which they sometimes do not mark, rarely give feedback and hardly do any remedial even when necessary.</li> <li>• Do not have a lot of materials, hardly find time to plan well and their lessons are more teacher-centred.</li> <li>• Hardly find any time for knitting close friendly relationship.</li> <li>• In most cases they do not cover the syllabus.</li> <li>• Rarely test their learners; this makes them get exam scare/fever when they are faced with exams.</li> <li>• Do not do much research, some do not teach well and give scanty notes.</li> <li>• Have better facilities e.g. secure classrooms they leave lots of charts and cards for learners to read on their own.</li> </ul>
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The teachers gave reasons for the differences in their performance. They said that:

- The urban teachers are better paid so they are in a better position to offset their domestic problems than the rural teachers. Thus the urban teachers work when they are more relaxed than the rural teachers.
- Well paid, as they are the urban teachers have to work so hard to keep their jobs in those schools. The rural teachers lack an impetus to motivate them. Many of them teach to pass the day.
- While the urban teachers live in/or around the schools, are given lunch and can comfortably stay longer at school to attend to their learners the rural teachers have to travel to and from the schools, work when tired, hungry and worried about the long distances they have to travel back to their homes.
- While the urban teachers have various sources of information like TV, internet and many reference books to consult the rural teachers have limited sources, and yet most of the rural teachers hardly find time to consult even those few.
- The urban teachers have more time to prepare and mark books at home because they have house helps, no gardens to attend to and smaller families to care for but the rural teachers must attend to their gardens if only to make sure that they can have food, they do not have maids and they live within large family networks that must be taken care of. The

situation in the homes of the rural teachers is more demanding and stressing than that in the urban homes. Such a situation weighs down on the rural teachers' performance.

- The urban parents are very supportive, they have the income thus they provide the scholastic materials for their children and this facilitates the constant practices through plenty of exercises but many rural parents cannot afford the scholastic materials. This, in addition to other problems curtails practice.

#### **10. The mediums of instruction (MOI) in the target classes**

I asked the teachers the MOI they use in their classes, why they use those MOI and whether they were comfortable using those specific ones.

All the teachers from schools A, B, D and E said they use English from P 1 to P 7 and they were very comfortable with it. They gave the following reasons:

- It is what the parents and teachers want.
- It is the language of examination and they want the learners to master it right from the start before they can face national exams.
- It saves the time that would otherwise be spent translating the content across various languages.
- It is the only way to make the learners access information from books.
- The classes are made of learners from different linguistic backgrounds and English unites them.
- That is what the language in education policy demands of them.

The teachers from school C said they try as much as possible to use English as MOI. It is what they use from P 3 to P 7 strictly. They said they use a bit of L<sub>1</sub> in lower classes

'Because some of our learners come to school when they do not understand English and we want them to learn just as well as those who do. We have to keep on translating for them'.

The teachers from school F said that for a long time they had been using L1. Two years ago they got a new headmaster who insisted that they should change and use English. Now they are using English from P 3. They said they were comfortable because their grades have started improving. "In P 3 I only translate if I sense that the learners have not understood me but now most of them do."

The teachers from schools G, H, I and J said that they use Lusoga in all classes and some English in P 6. It is in P 7 where they try to use English seriously. They said they are not very comfortable because they see the schools which use English performing well and they feel that the use of L1 is greatly responsible for their poor

performance ‘but our learners do not understand English, if you want them to get anything you have to teach in L1.’

### **11. The impact of the MOI on the learners’ achievement in exams especially in PLE**

I wanted to find out from the teachers whether they thought that the MOI has an impact on the learners’ achievement in exams especially in PLE. They all said that the MOI has a strong impact on the learners’ achievements and they gave the following views:

- The MOI relays all the subject content to the learners’ mind and the learners’ academic achievement is judged by the quantity of the content the learner understands and is able to use to answer the examination questions.
- The MOI should equip the learners with the tools such as vocabulary, structures and literacy practices that should enable them to prove that they have learnt what they have been taught. In the Ugandan education system specifically at PLE level these tools are vital because they are needed in the writing of exams by which the learners’ academic achievements are weighed. If the MOI does not equip them with the vital tools then it curtail s their performance.
- The MOI should enable the learners to access information from all possible sources. If it does not then the learners might be under-informed. This implies that they will not have all the facts they need to compete with those who are using an enabling MOI.

### **12. The MOI teachers prefer and why**

In response to this inquiry all the respondents (even those from the rural schools) said that they preferred English because it is the language of examination. They said that it needs to be introduced as early as possible and they gave the following reasons for the preference:

- Teaching in L1 develops the concepts but the notes are written in English and the concepts have to be presented in English to the examiners. This gives the learners the cumbersome task of translating the concepts from L1 to English before writing the answers. In the process the learner may fail to present the concepts correctly.
- A lot of time is wasted in the process of translating the subject content from one language to another during revision and examinations. During the exam the learners will read the questions in English, translate them to L1, relate them to the concepts, work out what the questions require in L1 and translate it back to English before writing it down in English. It is a long process.

- The syllabus and the textbooks are written in English. Teaching in L1 means that the teacher has to do a lot of translation and may lose out some facts in addition to wasting time in the process.
- The structures of different language differ. Internalising the structures of L1 might lead to direct translation of those structures into LOE. Then they will write sentences like ‘We breathe in the nose’ instead of ‘We breathe through the nose.’ By so doing the learners get judged as incompetent and this affects the grades they are awarded during the marking of exams. To the teachers I interviewed teaching in English would equip the learners with LOE and enable them to revise, read text books and examination questions, and understand and answer the questions as required. This would enable them pass their exams well.
- There is lack of direct vocabulary equivalents for some words, e.g. there are no Lusoga words oxygen, photosynthesis, carbon dioxide, comma etc. This makes the teachers use long winding explanations to put across the content which involves those words. Short of that they have to use the words in isolation which adds to the confusion the learners must go through as they translate what they have learnt to and fro different languages.
- In that process the learners end up spelling those words as they pronounce them using the spelling concepts of L1 thus the examiners get words like ‘karonidaokisaidi, okisijeni, fotosinsesisi, koma’ which are marked wrong and those candidates grades are lowered.
- The learners need to develop the supportive literacy practices in LOE (which is English in Uganda) early enough so that they can use them through the education system. The supportive practices such as fast reading and writing will enable them to gather a lot of knowledge about the content and thus face the exams confidently and pass them. This enhances the ego and motivates them to work even harder. Such hard work will lead to success. The reverse is likely to lead to failure or poor performance which will lead to frustration and eventually giving up school either because they have failed to pass to go to the next stage or because they cannot take any more frustration.

### **13. The teachers’ views on Uganda’s language in education policy(LEP)**

The general consensus among all the teachers was that the LEP is not fair to all Ugandan citizens. The gist underlying this view was that all the learners seat the same exams, written in one language by which their academic achievements are judged. “In all fairness they should be prepared in the same way,” almost all the teachers reasoned. They argued that English is not ‘our’ language and the learners need a lot of time to internalise it in order to realise the long proven dictum of ‘practice makes perfect’. To them the three years left for the rural learners are not enough to enable

them perfect this ‘alien’ language and compete favourably with the urban learners in the exams.

Many of the rural teachers said that they believe that their overuse L1 is one of the major reasons for the poor performance in their schools and it also accounts for mal-practices in exams whereby the teachers are caught assisting the learners. They try to read the questions and explain to them.

These teachers added that the rural learners ‘spend’ the P 5 year translating/relearning the concepts they have been learning and at same time going on with that year’s work while their counterparts are progressing steadily.

They also said that the prolonged use of L1 over the four primary years brings about a kind of ossification so that the learners and their teachers unconsciously ‘reject’ English. This is what makes the teachers continue teaching in L1 up to P 6 and up to P 7 in some schools to the peril of the learners’ academic achievements. When they attempt changing to English, the process is so slow that they cannot do much in the three years before they are required to seat for PLE.

The teachers observed that all the textbooks sent to the schools are written in English. Thus the learners need to be equipped with a language that will enable them to comfortably access the information and subject content in those books. The rural teachers confessed that as they teach using L1 they do it orally and the learners just have to listen, which denies them the development of the reading skill and its sub-skills such as comprehension and interpretation which are crucial in their education process. The urban learners develop these skills fairly early and they enhance their achievements.

They stressed that there is need for learners to develop the supportive literacy practices in LOE early enough so that they can use them through the education system. The present LEP denies the rural learner this opportunity as it implies that to have sufficient time for practice they have to wait for their fifth year of education. They argued that one or two twenty-thirty or forty-minute’s lesson(s) a day or three times a week are not enough to make the learners internalise a language.

**14. The impact of high/lack exposure to literacy events in English (such as watching TV, watching drama or listening to radio programmes) on the learners’ achievements in academic tasks.**

**Table 6 shows the impact of exposure to literacy events in English on Learners as perceived by the teachers.**

<b>High exposure</b>	<b>Low exposure</b>
• Reinforces the internalisation and	• Limits access to knowledge and

<p>perfection of LOE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concretises concept and learning in general.</li> <li>• Facilitates access to knowledge and information from a variety of sources.</li> <li>• Aids memory.</li> <li>• Inspires the learners they wish to be like those excellent presenters.</li> <li>• Enhances the development of vital literacy skills such as reading speed, listening, comprehension and accurate spelling needed in education.</li> <li>• Improves vocabulary, pronunciation and expression.</li> <li>• Enriches the content the learners get in class.</li> <li>• Relates content to real life situations aiding learning.</li> </ul>	<p>information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curtails the development of vital skills such as reading speed, listening, comprehension and accurate spelling needed in education.</li> <li>• Denies access to near perfect models and mentors.</li> <li>• Inhibits inspiration.</li> <li>• Makes the learners rely on the teacher as the sole source of knowledge.</li> <li>• Some concepts remain abstract.</li> </ul>
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### **15. The teachers' expectations from the parents in the process of their children's education.**



The urban teachers said that they expected the parents to play the following roles in order to enhance their children's academic achievements.

- To provide scholastic materials such as exercise books, pens pencils mathematical sets.
- Pay fees promptly so that the children settle in school.
- Buy them textbooks and other supportive materials from which they can access knowledge such as newspapers, magazines etc.
- Help the learners through scaffolding activities and guide them as they do homework.
- Co-operate with the school administration and the teachers.
- Follow up the children's performance, visit the school talk to the teachers and follow the advice they give in support of improving the performance.
- Be good hardworking and disciplined models.
- Make sure that the home environment is relaxed so that the learners are not stressed and that they are well fed and kept healthy.
- Encourage the children, talk to them and show them that you care about their studies.

The rural teachers said that they expected the parents to play their roles seriously in order to enhance their children's academic achievements. They mentioned almost all the roles the urban teachers had suggested but they added the following:

- The parents needed to get more involved in the education of their children more especially by consulting the teachers on what they should do to help the children.
- They should go for adult literacy classes so that they can at least be in position to initiate and support the acculturation process of their children's education in an organised and informed way.

**16. The teachers' recommendations of what various categories of people should do to reduce the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in Uganda**

- **Head teachers**

The teachers recommended that in order to reduce the academic achievement imbalance between the rural and urban schools in Uganda the head teachers should endeavour to:

- Work together and co-operate with all the other stakeholders viz the teachers, parents and the learners.
- Identify and solve the problems faced by their schools.
- Reduce their absenteeism.
- Supervise the teachers to make sure they do what is required of them. Give them as much support and encouragement as they can.
- Make sure that what is supplied by the govt is used effectively. Do not lock up text books and disappear from school.
- Avail required materials such as charts and chalk promptly.
- Befriend better schools and be ready to learn from them. Engage in debates, quizzes and other academic activities with them. Get their past internal exam papers and let your learners try doing them.
- Teach some lessons so that the staff can feel that the head teachers are part of the team.
- The rural head teachers should encourage the teachers and the learners to use in and out of the class.
- Do some courses both in education and management so that they can do their jobs better.
- Facilitate educational tours for both teachers and learners.
- Try to persuade good teachers to join your staff.
- Promote as many supportive literacy practices as possible.
- Educate parents about their roles and what they can do to improve their economic status.

- **Fellow teachers**

The teachers advised that for the academic achievement gap between the rural and urban schools to be narrowed their colleagues should do the following:

- Go for upgrading or refresher courses so that they can refresh and/or improve their methods of teaching.
- Be ready to serve anywhere and do a good job.
- Relate well with the head teachers, parents and the learners. Advise the parents about their children and what they can do to make them improve.
- Do research, prepare well, plan the lessons, teach effectively and give remedial exercises where required.
- Reduce absenteeism and try to stay in school longer. Put in more effort and time in their job.
- Endeavour to know the learners at least by name.
- The rural teachers should visit the urban schools, sit in the classes observe and copy what they think can help them to improve their performance.
- Endeavour to speak English and try to be good models at least to the middle and upper primary learners.
- Try to be resourceful, make use of the environment and improvise to make the lessons interesting, captivating and memorable.

- **Parents**

The teachers were of the view that the parents were a crucial factor in the education of their children. They said that the dichotomous academic achievement gap can be bridged if the all parents involved played a fundamental role. They said that the parents should:

- Support, encourage and work hand in hand with the teachers, the school administration and their children in all matters concerning their children's education.
- Endeavour to improve the situation in the schools e.g. by participating in constructing classrooms.
- Play their roles especially providing the sufficient scholastic materials for their children and all the orphans they look after.
- Provide lunch and ensure that the children are healthy.
- Help the children with homework as much as they can.
- Follow up their schoolwork by checking the books, visiting the school and talking to the teachers.

- Reduce the domestic chores the children do so that they can have the time to do homework, revise their notes and study at home.
- Make the home environment conducive for home study.
- Talk to their children, counsel them and encourage them to work hard.
- Instil and foster discipline in their children.
- **Teacher trainers**

The teachers made the following recommendations for the teacher trainers:

- Keep researching in order to remain very knowledgeable and demonstrate dexterity in their fields so that they can be good models.
- Give more content to the trainees during the training.
- Equip the trainees with efficient methods of handling the subject content through being resourceful and innovative after they qualify.
- Instil diligence and discipline in the trainees.
- Organise refresher courses and workshops for the teachers to expose them to newer and more effective methods of teaching.
- Prolong and supervise school practice effectively so that it can be a gainful experience for the trainees.
- Equip the trainees with life skills to enable them survive in the world outside college especially in the rural areas.

- **Learners**

The teachers advised the learners to:

- Be ready to work hard with minimal supervision.
- Be disciplined, listen to and follow advice from both teachers and parents.
- Attend school regularly and be attentive in class.
- Do a lot of practice in form of exercises, intensive and extensive reading.
- Form discussion groups and discuss their work regularly.
- Use English whenever they can.

**Policy makers**

- Make fair policies.
- Visit the field to evaluate what how their policies are being implemented.
- Put mechanism in place to oversee what goes on in the country.

## APPENDIX C

### GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHER TRAINERS

1. Give me a brief account about the linguistic level of the teacher trainees by the time they come to college and they graduate.
2. What are the literacy practices they engage in during the training?
3. What are other literacy practices you think should be emphasised in order to produce teachers who can teach in English effectively? What about those who should teach in L<sub>1</sub> effectively?
4. Do you have specific training for those students who are expected to teach in L1s?
5. What would you advise the teacher trainees to do in order to be equipped with skills for the teaching process ahead of them?
6. What are some of the things a teacher needs to do to help learners improve their academic achievements?
7. In your assessment, what effect does the teacher have on the pupils: (a) Learning of English? (b) Academic achievements?
8. In your opinion, how does the medium of instruction (MOI) impact on the learners' academic achievement in examinations especially PLE?
9. What do you think is the impact of the language policy in education on the:
  - a) The rural
  - b) The urban learners in Uganda?
10. In your view, what are the causes of the imbalance that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and the urban learners?
11. How can the gap between the rural and urban learners' academic achievement be narrowed/bridged?
12. What are the literacy practices (e.g. reading and writing activities) commonly engaged in by:
  - a) rural learners?
  - b) Urban learners?

13. How does the teaching in rural areas differ from that in the urban areas as a result of the imbalance in the literacy practices?

14. What recommendation would you give the following people:

a) The teacher trainees

b) The head teachers

c) The teacher

d) The policy makers

e) Parents

f) Fellow teacher trainers

in as far as the performance of your children in these schools is concerned?

15. The impact of poverty on the community in the Iganga district



## INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHER TRAINERS

I interviewed four teacher trainers individually. They were from four different fields namely Mathematics, English, Science and Social Studies. Their responses were almost the same therefore I have compiled them to get what I have below.

### **1. Give me a brief account about the linguistic level of the teacher trainees by time they come to college and they graduate.**

By the time the trainees join college they are at different linguistic levels. This is because the college admits mostly senior four and a few senior six leavers. The senior six leavers are usually good by the time they join college. This is not the case for the senior four leavers. Some of these are good but others are very poor. Those who come from good schools join when they understand English very well and can express themselves freely and clearly both orally and in writing. Those from poor schools are hesitant, with poor expression, limited vocabulary and generally shy to speak English. It depends on their background.

The situation is made worse by the fact that the college starts in April when these students finished senior four/six in November the previous year. Most of them come from rural areas thus spend the whole vacation communicating using their local languages. That lack of practice affects them.

By the time they graduate they can all express themselves very fluently both orally and in writing and we are convinced that they can teach English as a subject and through English as a MOI.

### **2. The literacy practices the trainees engage in during the training**

We encourage them to read novels, short stories, magazines and newspapers. All these are readily available in the college library. We also give them extracts to read and comprehension questions work out individually and sometimes in groups. We advise them to play language games such as word jigsaws, scrabble and to fill in crossword puzzles found in magazines and newspapers.

Attendance of lectures is compulsory for all the students and all the lectures are delivered in English. We impress on them the need to form discussion groups in which they should discuss their academic work and we advise them to use English as the college admits students from all over the country. We have a writer's club which stresses writing skills and the members are told to write poems, plays, short stories and academic essays about given topics, events or particular situations. What is written is then read out by the writers and then displayed on the clubs notice board. Every body is encouraged to join the writers club.

The students are also involved in demonstration lessons. These lessons are in two sections: first the students watch the trainers conducting a lesson, and then students are also made to conduct similar lessons while others observe. At the end of each lesson comments are made and the success or failures of each lesson are discussed. These demonstrations help them to develop their teaching methods and the speaking skills.

### **3. Other literacy practices the trainers think should be emphasised in order to produce teachers who can teach in English and in L1 effectively**

The teacher trainers were of the view that to teach English effectively one must practice a lot of reading in English, read both extensive and intensively and read anything written in that language, newspapers, magazines, novels etc. Practice a lot of writing; write letters, notes, notices, minutes, poems, and articles. That person should devise ways of improving the level of vocabulary and self-expression. This can be enhanced through discussing in groups, participating in debates, drama, recitations, attending public lectures, listening to radio stations like BBC and VOA watch TV programs in English. In essence one should have a wide exposure to English and should master it before teaching it.

For those who intend to teach in local languages there is need, in addition to the exposure said above, to master the local language at all levels i.e. phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels. They should listen to and be able to do a lot of story telling; they should know plenty of the traditional folklores, songs and rhymes. They should be very conversant with that language's culture.

### **4. Availability of specific training for those students who are expected to teach in L1s**

The teacher trainers said at their college there was not any such specific training for those expected to teach using L1s. They said, "...not at this college and not at any college that trains primary school teachers in Uganda. We have not seen any syllabus giving such guidelines. All trainees are taught together. Those who teach using those languages do so just because they find it convenient and, maybe, easy for them".

### **5. The trainers' advice for the teacher trainees with regard to being equipped with skills for the teaching process ahead of them**

It was a consensus that the trainees should endeavour to practice the language skills a great deal. They should also engage in all the college activities such as visiting the farm, the art and craft section and all the departments to acclimatise themselves with what goes on there since in primary schools they are expected to teach all subjects. They should participate in co-curricula activities such as debate, drama, and current affairs discussions. They should get conversant with the primary school syllabus, take

study tours and see sites which feature in the syllabus content they will be handling when they get out there.

They should be open minded and thirsty for knowledge and do whatever it takes to become knowledgeable. (I learnt that the college sponsors only one study tour for the second year students. The respondents said that they know it is not enough but that is what the college can afford. They said they encourage the trainees to take more tours on their own.)

When they go out for school practice they should get fully involved in the school routine, take off time to watch the already qualified teachers teach and should not hesitate to consult them when they need help.

#### **6. Some of the things teachers need to do to help primary school learners improve their academic achievements**

The teacher trainers suggested that teachers should know their learners and understand learners' capabilities, group them and find out how they can best help them to make sure maximum learning take place in the classroom. The teachers should endeavour to find out the learners' interests and see how best they can help to foster the development of these interests. They should give them a lot of guided practice in all the required skills as they prepare them for the rigours of the education process. They should create an environment that facilitates wide reading in all genres and in all subjects. They should encourage them to work hard and equip them with a wide range of vocabulary and structures they need when it comes to doing exams. They should encourage the good learners to assist the weak. Above all they need to present themselves as very good models, in all possible ways, for the learners to emulate.

#### **7. The trainers' views about the effect the teacher might have on the pupils:** **a) Learning of English** **b) Academic achievements**

##### **a) Teachers' effect on learners as they learn English**

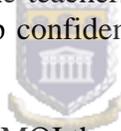
The respondents said the teachers greatly affect the pupils in the process of learning English. They said that if the teachers are good, then most likely the learners will also be good because the teachers are the most accessible models the learners have. The learners will get pronunciation, structures, expressions, tones and intonation from their teachers. If the teachers are poor then they will pass on their poor skills to the learner and that if the teachers speak English often even the learners will speak if often.

##### **b) Teachers' effects on the learners' academic achievement**

The teacher trainers conceded that the teachers' effects on learners' academic achievement are tremendous. Good teachers who are committed and know their methods and content will enhance learning. They will not waste time on irrelevant trivialities. They will deliver the subject content using a variety of interesting methods. Good teachers can find ways of improvising to get what they want to use even in the face of scarcity. This will make the classroom atmosphere relaxed and friendly. Learning will take place. In such a climate the learners will understand what is taught and are likely to exhibit high achievements. The reverse yields the opposite. The environment in the class will be hostile and learners will lose interest in what goes on in class. Time will be wasted on non-issues. In the process the learners will not be able to register high academic achievements.

#### **8. The impact of the medium of instruction (MOI) on the learners' academic achievement in examinations especially PLE**

The teacher trainers asserted that the MOI has an enormous impact on the learners' academic achievement as it facilitates the acquisition of knowledge. All the content a teacher has is passed on to the learners through the medium of instruction. It is important that the learners are comfortable with the MOI so that they can understand what is taught and internalise the concepts. This will enable them to do all their exercises correctly, to interact with the teachers and fellow learners freely. With all that in place the learners will develop confidence and the language skills necessary for doing the examinations.



If the learners have problems with the MOI then their intake of the subject content, as the teachers pass it on will be limited. They will miss the facts or get them distorted. This will lead to frustration, as their work will not give them the satisfaction that success brings. At the end of it all their examination scores will be bad.

The learners' academic achievements are usually reflected through their examination scores. This is very important especially in PLE because this is the first set of national exams in Uganda. It acts as a placement exam in that it will determine the kind of school a learner will go to. And the kind of secondary school a learner goes to will have a bearing on that learner's future in that a learner who goes to a very good school is likely to perform much better than one who ends up in a poor school.

#### **9. The teacher trainers' views about the impact of the language in education policy on the:** **a) The rural** **b) The urban learners in Uganda**

The general consensus was that in spite of all its good intentions, the policy is unfair and raises concern among practical educators especially those working in the rural areas.

### **a) The rural learners**

All the respondents agreed that the three years the rural learners have from P 5 to P 7 could not be enough for them to come to the same linguistic level with the urban learners. They said that much as the concepts may be well developed in the first language, the learners will lack the expression required by examination rigours in Uganda where competition starts very early on the academic ladder.

They said that the disparity between MOI and language of examination (LOE) is greatly responsible for the rural learners' academic underachievement. They shared the view that as the concepts are passed on and grasped in L1 these learners are trained to think about those concepts in L1 and when it comes to exams which are written in English, then, a lot of time is spent as they read the questions in English, translate them into L1, think about the concepts involved and then translate the concepts back into the language of exam before the answers are written.

In line with this the respondent from the Science Education Department was very sceptical as to whether actually most of the concepts are fully grasped because of lack of direct linguistic equivalents. He cited words like 'photosynthesis', 'carbon dioxide' and he said that there were no exact equivalents for them in Lusoga. He said that as a result the teachers take a lot of time labouring to make the learners understand the content "assuming they succeed". This respondent added that if the teacher decides to use the word in English such a word becomes isolated and de-contextualised and part of the meaning is lost in the process. In exams many learners spell such words 'in L1 such as 'fotosinsesisi' or 'kabonidaiokisaidi' and they fail.

### **b) The urban learners**

All the four respondents agreed that the language in education policy favours the urban learners. The early exposure to LOE makes them acquire vocabulary, structure, expression and the fluency, which they put to use when doing exams. "Since they have worked with the LOE for long they have internalised it and thus internalise the subject content early. The learners then use LOE to think and no time is lost in translating the content back and forth between languages before writing it down" they explained. They conceded that the teacher does not use a lot of time to labour points before they are grasped and the words, which have no L1 equivalents, are not de-contextualised as in the case of the rural learners.

Like all the other respondents, the teacher trainers also confirmed that while there are virtually no written materials in Lusoga, there is plenty in English so the urban learners start interacting with the written materials as early as they can appreciate written graphics. When they go to school they meet the graded ones, which they use under the teachers' guidance. They get access to subject content and a lot of knowledge, for example about AIDS, hygiene, and life in general. While this wide exposure starts very early for these urban learners, the rural ones get so little during

the English lessons which are 30-40 minutes a day. Most of the content is passed on orally and the learners cannot read it for themselves to internalise it like the urban learners do.

These informants ascertained to me that knowing and speaking English in Uganda is prestigious and it instils a lot of confidence and satisfaction in a person. To them the urban learners have the confidence instilled in them very early in life and it is greatly boosted by the success they register as they pass their exams every year. At the end of the primary cycle they go to the good secondary schools and their excellent academic achievements continue.

All the respondents said that to be fair to rural learners English should be introduced as early as possible. To them what was required in rural areas was the two languages to be used to enhance learning. In P 1 and P 2 the teachers could use English but translate whenever they deem it necessary in order to make learners get as much content as possible.

#### **10. The causes of the imbalance that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and the urban learners**

The respondents gave several factors responsible for the imbalance. The most salient one they explained was the difference in remuneration. They said that the salary the government pays the primary school teachers is far less than what can sustain a family however small that family can be. (A primary school class teacher in Uganda earns Shs105000/-to 150,000/- or US\$ 50 to US\$ 75 per month.) This dampens the teachers' morale. However, much as the urban schools are also UPE schools the parents pay some money. This makes the urban schools to have higher income, which enables the administration to do several things. (In 1996 the government of Uganda declared free Universal Primary Education. Parents are not supposed to pay any school fees. They are required to look after their children's welfare and supply scholastic materials. UPE became effective in 1997.)

Part of the money collected is then used to pay allowances to the teachers. These allowances ease the lives of the urban teachers. This raises their morale as it supplements their meagre income. Hence they work harder than the frustrated rural teachers who can hardly make ends meet. In return the urban teachers put in more hours of earnest work. They teach from 7:00 am and attend to the learners even up to 6:30 pm in the evening. These teachers work that hard because the conditions in their schools are much better than in other schools and none would opt to lose their jobs in such schools. In essence these schools are very marketable that they end up having only well-trained and excellent teachers. This makes their quality of work good.

In addition part of the money is used to put facilities in place. These facilities include providing accommodation for the teachers. The urban schools have staff quarters where the teachers stay in the school premises or they rent houses for them in the

school neighbourhood. This means that the teachers stay within or very close to the schools. They do not have to walk long distances to school like their counter parts in the rural schools who reside in their homes, which are sometimes as far as six to ten kilometres away from schools. Thus the urban teachers start their work when they are fresh and they can work for long hours without worrying about trekking back to their homes after hours of work. In addition these teachers are given lunch at school and therefore they teach in the afternoon when they are strong. The learners are also fed at school. They do not have to run home for lunch or to study on empty stomachs as their counter parts in the rural schools do.

The administration uses some of that money to buy more textbooks and other learning materials for the learners to supplement those supplied by government. These schools also buy more reference books for the teachers. This means that both the teachers and the learners have more access to content knowledge.

The respondents expounded that the money the parents pay has also helped to control the enrolment in these schools. This makes the numbers of the learners in the classes manageable by the teachers in the school. I was informed that when the numbers became big the management bodies advise the head teacher to employ a few more teachers who are now paid by the school to ease the load for the teachers.

These teacher trainers pointed out (and I observed) that the urban schools have better amenities in form of well constructed and furnished buildings for classrooms, libraries and halls. They also have clean water and electricity. These facilities make life comfortable for both the learners and the teachers. Thus, the environment is more conducive for learning than in the rural areas where some classes study under trees. The classrooms have furniture and shutters so that charts, maps, reading cards and other learning material are left in classes for learners to read and internalise the content in their free time. This is not possible in rural schools where even the few classrooms do not have enough seats for the pupils, no shutters hence no learning materials can be left behind for learners to work with.

In addition, these informants said that the urban parents endeavour to buy textbooks and all the requirements for their children. The children both use what they buy at school and at home. This means that these children have more practice with books hence they get to develop supportive literacy practices that enhance their learning.

These teacher trainers also observed that the socio-economic status of the urban parents was better than that of the rural parents and this makes them able to have home libraries, buy newspapers, and own TVs and radios. They said that the children pick a lot of knowledge from those facilities that supplements what they get at school. A lot of that knowledge is relevant to the syllabus content they get at school and is useful in examinations.

Another reason given for the difference was that the urban parents are educated and know the value of education. Hence they see to it that any homework taken home by the children is done. They guide the children or if they are unable they get somebody to help and guide their children as they do the homework.

The teacher trainers said that on the other hand, it seems both the rural head teachers and the teachers are complacent. They have accepted the status quo and given up trying to make the children pass. "They have resigned to fate," one of the trainers remarked. All of them said that the head teachers spend little time in the schools and the teachers tend to relax when the head teachers are absent.

They also said that most rural schools are not able to accommodate teachers in the school compound or to rent for them in the school neighbourhood. This means that the teachers stay in their homes that, in some cases, are very far from the schools. They have to walk or ride bicycles for long distances to come to school. The respondents observed that sometimes the homes are more than ten kilometres away from schools. Thus by the time the teachers reach school and start their work, they are already tired and they work while worrying about trekking back to their homes after long hours of work.

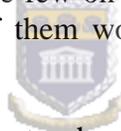
And since the rural parents do not pay any money to the schools the teachers in rural areas do not get any allowances and consequently "...they have to look for alternatives to make sure they cope with life". They do this by tending to their gardens before going to school and rushing back to them in the evenings just to make sure they can get some food from the gardens. This is one of the reasons why they spend shorter periods in school. These respondents divulged that a good number of the teachers and the pupils arrive at school late, some as late as 9:30 am when the lessons officially begin at 8:00 am and leave as early as 3:00 pm when classes are supposed to end at 4:00 pm and schools to close at 5:00 pm after cleaning and co-curricula activities. These teachers have little contact time with the learners implying that they may not be able to cover the syllabus leave alone doing any remedial work. To these educators it was obvious that with that exhaustion and anxiety the teachers could not be very effective.

These respondents revealed that the rural parents are poor and felt relieved when the government declared primary school free (UPE which took effect in 1997). Thus, they do not pay any money to the schools but send their children to school. They also admitted that while some parents do not pay because they genuinely do not have others are just not bothered. Those in the later category reason that they have no hope of seeing their children go beyond primary school for two reasons: 1) Children in the rural areas never pass exams well enough to go to good secondary schools where they could excel and eventually get good jobs which would give the both social and economic mobility. 2) Even if the children passed the parents would not be able to pay the fees required for secondary and university education.

In addition the discussants admitted that many of the parents in these rural schools either cannot afford to buy all the scholastic materials required by the children or they do not want to. A good number of their children go to school without exercise books, or pens and therefore do not do any exercises in class or homework.

These teacher trainers also observed that due to these parents' socio-economic status they cannot afford to set up home libraries, buy newspapers. They do not have TVs because they cannot afford them and there is no electricity in the rural areas of the Iganga district and even if there were, most of the rural parents would not afford it as it is quite expensive. A few of these parents have radios but in most homes these are a reserve of the fathers because the batteries are also expensive. Thus these children cannot pick a lot of knowledge from those facilities to supplement what they get at school like the urban learners do. In the process they miss a lot of that knowledge that is relevant to the syllabus content, which would be useful in examinations.

In line with this I learnt that the majority of rural parents are illiterate hence even if their children took home homework they would not be in position to help or guide them in any way. But the children hardly take any homework home for two reasons: 1) the teachers do not give them any because they know that even if they did it will not be done. 2) Very few parents buy enough exercise books for their children and 'there is no need to waste pages of the few on homework'. In addition, the children get home late and tired and most of them would just doze when given time and materials to do the homework.



Another factor highlighted by these the teacher trainers was that the rural schools do not provide lunch for teachers. Therefore, most teachers teach in the afternoon when they are hungry. Those who live close to the schools have to go home for their lunch increasing the chances of either coming back late for the afternoon lessons or not coming back at all. The learners, too, are not fed at school. They have either to run home for lunch, survive on cold leftovers of their previous suppers they have carried to school or to study on empty stomachs. Like their teachers, some of those who go for lunch may either come back late for the afternoon lessons or they may not come back at all. This is not the case for their counter parts in the urban schools who are given lunch at school.

Due to poverty, the conditions in the rural homes are not very conducive to learning. The feeding is not as good as that in the urban homes where the parents have steady income and can afford three decent/balanced meals a day. Malnourished children are not a rare sight in rural areas. The biggest percentage of the rural population has no access to clean water and many of them still depend on local herbs for medication. In most cases the children are in poor health state.

Besides the appalling conditions at home, the teacher trainers pointed out that the conditions in the rural schools also contribute to the poor performance of the learners. The rural schools lack facilities such as libraries, furniture, and enough textbooks. (I

did not see any library in the rural schools. The books the government supplied were piled in the head teachers' offices or heaped in small rooms referred to as bookstores and most of them covered with thick layers of dust: a sign of non-usage). In some schools some classes study under trees for lack of enough buildings. Some children sit on the ground and write with the books placed either on the ground or on their laps for lack of sufficient furniture. They added that the textbooks supplied by government are not enough and children have to crowd around the few if they are to use them at all. The numbers of pupils in the classes are big and this makes the sharing ratio high. These big numbers also make it hard for the teachers to manage the classes, sustain the class control and teaching effectively.

The teacher trainers also told me that the rural learners lack focus due to the fact that there are not many role models to inspire them. This is because of the rural-urban drift. Those who are left in the rural areas have almost nothing to inspire the youngsters as they live in abject poverty. They have no hope of accessing better life. The rural teachers and learners never think of visiting the urban schools to find out what enables them to perform well. A few good teachers who come to join these schools soon 'catch the disease and join their seniors in the frustration'. This, in addition, to their conditions of living makes the rural learners perform poorly. In turn the constant poor results discourage/frustrate any good teachers and they end up seeking employment elsewhere and the vicious circle continues.

### **11. Suggestions for narrowing/bridging the gap between the rural and urban learners' academic achievement**



The following suggestions were made:

The govt should try and raise the teachers' salaries in order to boost their morale. These salaries should also come promptly. (I learnt that sometimes the salaries are delayed up to past the middle of the following month.) The govt could also facilitate the setting up of projects such as growing crops in rural schools. The head teachers would sell the products to raise some money they could use to pay bonuses to the teachers to help them solve some of their financial problems. Part of the returns from these projects could be used to solve some of the schools' problems e.g. to construct some simple houses for the staff so that they can stay in the school and do more work like their urban counterparts. Or part of that money could be used to buy a few more text books to add to what the govt supplies and ease the sharing ratios. In line with this the respondents suggested that there is need to post more teachers to the rural schools so that the teacher-pupil ratio is reduced. This can make the classes to be more manageable and less stressful for the teachers. This would facilitate more meaningful teaching and a lot more learning would take place.

The govt should consider the schools' enrolment while supplying materials so that the overcrowding of learners over textbooks is reduced. Govt should contribute generously towards the construction and furnishing of more classrooms. It should

also facilitate construction of staff quarters so that the teachers can be housed within the school and be saved from travelling long distances to and from the school everyday.

The head teachers should stay in schools longer than they do to supervise and encourage the teachers to do their duty diligently. They should also participate in the teaching so that the teachers feel that their bosses are also part of the team.

The school administration should devise ways of organising lunch for the teachers and the learners. This could save time for the afternoon lessons and reduce both absenteeism and the dropout rate.

These respondents were of the view that transfers of teachers and head teachers could also help, as the new teachers would take along tricks, which could help improve the rural schools. This could be possible if the education offices tried to tress the home areas of some of the urban teachers and convince them to go back and help the people they left behind.

The head teachers should also release the books the govt has supplied to be used instead of locking them up to gather dust. The argument was that it is better to use the few books than to use nothing. The few learners who would get access would benefit.

The teacher trainers suggested that ‘workshops, seminars and refresher courses need to be organised to refresh the teachers’ methods of teaching. This could help the learners gain interest in class work so that they can be more attentive in class. The same forum could be used to appeal to the teachers to become more committed to their work. Using the same forum the teachers could also be advised to become more resourceful and start projects that would help them alleviate their poverty.

The rural teachers should get out of their cocoons and visit the urban schools to find out what the urban teachers do to make their learners perform well. They should seek and follow the urban teachers’ advice and invite them to talk to and encourage their learners.

There is also need to educate the parents especially those from rural areas to make them see the value of education so that they become more active in their children’s education process and play supportive roles, such as providing the scholastic materials. The parents should also ensure that their children are well fed and health so that they can study effectively. They should endeavour to check on their children’s progress at school and work hand in hand with the teachers to create conditions which enhance learning.

**12. The literacy practices (e.g. reading and writing activities) commonly engaged in by:**

- a) **Rural learners**
- b) **Urban learners**

**a) The rural learners**

According to the teacher trainers the rural learners usually revise the notes they get in class at school. They usually do this a day or two before exams. A few lucky ones may chance to borrow a text and read it for a few hours at school. Occasionally they read *Young Talk* and *Straight Talk*. These are newspapers, which are sent to schools by Ministry of Education and Sports twice a month. Otherwise it is quite rare to see rural children busy with books.

They also listen to radios at home but they listen to programs in either Luganda or their own first languages. (Luganda is the language of the Baganda who are the biggest linguistic community in Uganda. It is also spoken by many other people because it is the one which was developed by the British as they spread their control over Uganda and in the process of introducing formal education in Uganda.)

**b) The urban Learners**

The teacher trainers said that the urban learners engage in a wide variety of literacy practices. They listen to radio and watch TV programs in English because it is the language used in most of their homes. They discuss academic work, various issues and some of the radio and TV programs with their parents. They have access to theatres, thus many of them watch drama.

The urban schools have well stocked libraries, which also provide newspapers, magazines and other reading materials and time is set aside for these learners to make good use of these libraries.

The urban learners have plenty of textbooks, charts, cards and supplementary readers in their schools and are encouraged to read by their teachers. They also revise their notes and write plenty of exercises because they have the scholastic materials provided by their parents.

Many of them have home libraries and their parents buy for them textbooks, newspapers and magazines hence they read a great deal even at home. These children access a lot of information from what they read from billboards, walls and brochures. These are usually found in urban areas and not in rural areas.

The teachers in urban areas stay longer in schools and hold valuable academic discussions with their learners.

Some of the urban learners write articles for their schools' magazines and two of the schools used in this study are well known for writing articles for the children columns in the country's newspapers.

### **13. How the teaching in rural areas differ from that in the urban areas as a result of the imbalance in the literacy practices according to the teacher trainers**

The teacher trainers informed me that the teaching in these two dichotomous areas differ greatly. They pointed out that with all the facilities, which include textbooks, reference books, charts and other teaching materials for the teachers; in place the teaching in urban areas is simpler. The learners have access to these materials. As they read and do a lot of practice with them they become more knowledgeable. This makes the teacher efficient, as the learners know their content and are confident. Consequently, the teaching and the learning processes become easier and more satisfying.

These respondents said that the urban teachers do not have to labour much to put the content across as the learners have vast access to knowledge and many a time come to class when they have read ahead of the teacher.

Secondly, the medium of instruction in urban schools is English, which is also the language of textbooks and exams. Because of this, the teachers use less time to explain the facts as the learners do not have to get the facts in one language and present then in another. This enables the learners to understand and contextualise all the content as it is being taught and write it during exams in the same language.

I was also told that teaching in urban schools is easier and more enjoyable because the teachers are well paid and motivated to do their work. They put in a lot of painless effort and since their learners pass exams they are encouraged to work harder for even better grades.

On the other hand, the rural learners have very limited exposure to subject content and knowledge in general and so the teachers have to labour to make sure that the learners understand whatever is taught as they have no chance of reading for themselves.

The rural learners also lack scholastic materials thus, they do very little practice, if any, which may not be enough for them to internalise the content.

The rural teachers are de-motivated and they work half-heartedly. This, in addition to their numerous domestic problems, makes them spend less time in school. This implies that they cover less content and hardly do any remedial work.

The lack of enough text and reference books in rural schools complicates the situation all the more. It means that the teachers cannot access enough facts and could end up giving substandard, uninformed or distorted content to the learners. The learners cannot read and internalise for themselves.

The MOI in rural areas is the local language, which is different from the LOE. This means that the learners have to get the content in language x and translate it into English before they can internalise it and present it in exercises or exams. This in most cases means that the teacher has to do a lot of laborious translation thus using double time and effort to do the same work.

**14. The teacher trainers' recommendation for following people:**

- a) The teacher trainees**
  - b) The head teachers**
  - c) The teacher**
  - d) The policy makers**
  - e) Parents**
  - f) Fellow teacher trainers**
- in as far as the performance of primary school learners is concerned**

**a) Teacher trainees**

These were advised to work hard to excel in their studies, polish their language and be ready to be creative and resourceful after qualifying. The teacher trainers said that the trainees needed to understand the environment and be able to use it to sustain themselves. They should upgrade themselves by taking other courses. They should not be shy to consult the teachers they find in the field but should guard against being influenced and misled into becoming complacent.

**b) Head teachers**

The teacher trainers said that a lot rests with the head teachers since they are the immediate supervisors of the education system in Uganda. They recommended that the head teachers needed to be in school more often and improve their managerial skills to ensure that a lot of work is done. They need to co-operate more with the teachers, consult them on matters of teaching and discipline and involve them in decision making. They should also teach some subjects too and if possible give some demonstration lessons while the teachers observe. If they feel that they are not good enough they can invite teachers from other schools to do so. This would show that they care. The teachers will feel that their bosses are putting in a lot of effort and will work harder.

The respondents suggested that the head teachers should trust their deputies and learn to delegate duties such as opening the bookstores and/or head teachers' offices when they (the head teachers) are off station on official duties.

They should endeavour to sensitise the parents about the importance of education and the roles expected of them in the educational process. They should advise the parents on matters of their children's education, discipline, health and feeding both at home and at school. They should also advise them to monitor their children's school attendance and performance.

The teacher trainers also recommended that the head teachers should ensure good working relationship between the school administrations, the teachers and the parents and they should regularly talk to the pupils, encouraging them to work hard.

They should listen and try their best to solve the teachers' and learners' problems. The example given here was provision of lunch for the teachers and the learners to enable them stay in school and teach/learn comfortably in the afternoon.

They should identify the problems the schools are facing and try to solve them such as putting up temporary shelters to house the classes which study under trees or at least to create class streams to reduce congestion in the classes. This would make the classes more manageable and more learning would take place.

They should start income generating projects and encourage all the teachers and learners to participate and make the projects succeed.

They should endeavour to help the teachers improve their methodology by organising short refresher courses, seminars and workshops and also by taking them to observe what happens in the schools which do well and provide the required teaching materials.

### **c) The teachers**

The following recommendations were given for the teachers:

- Teach diligently and effectively by trying out the various methods they learnt while in college and any new ones, which they think to be effective.
- Be time conscious and instil rules and order in the classrooms to ensure that there is discipline in class while they teach.
- Be focused; upgrade to seek new knowledge and methods.
- They should not be complacent and give up trying to improve the schools' standards.
- Plan and prepare what to teach, follow it, know their content and use appropriate language and methods, which engage the learners' attention to make them understand what is taught.
- Endeavour to complete the syllabi in good time and help children to revise at school because some never revise at home.

- Be exemplary e.g. by mastering their skills such as pronunciation, working hard and behaving well to present admirable and inspiring models to learners.
- Visit the good schools and practice what they learn from them.
- They should not give up the weak learners but try and help them to improve.
- Be creative, resourceful and seek out ways of exploiting the environment to sustain themselves.

#### **d) The policy makers**

The teacher trainers gave the following recommendations for the policy makers:

- They should visit the field to know what goes on and tailor the policies according to realities.
- Disseminate information so that teacher, parents, head teachers and the community know what is expected of them.
- Make fair policies, which suit all Ugandan citizens.
- Resuscitate and facilitate school inspection and use it as a means of improving standards in schools.
- Spare no efforts in helping the teachers improve their academic and professional levels.
- Organising and facilitating refresher courses, workshops and seminars for the teachers and teacher trainers and expose them to new and more effective methods of teaching.
- Pay more attention to rural schools because they take care of the biggest percentage of the population.
- Since education is highly professional, technical and sensitive, where need arises the policy makers should consult professionals before putting out policies or those who make the policies about education should be enlightened professionals.
- They should advise govt on professional matters such as the link between teachers' motivation and performance.

#### **e) Parents**

All the teacher trainers conceded that it was mainly the rural parents who needed advice and sensitisation. These were the recommendations they advanced for all the parents but more specifically for the rural parents. They should:

- Try their best to be resourceful and work hard to uplift their income level instead of indulging in self-pity.

- Get interested in their children's education and be willing to invest in it by paying some money that can enable the schools to run e.g. by buying chalk when the government funds are delayed.
- Respect the head teachers and the teachers, listen to them and follow the advice they give and co-operate with them on academic and discipline matters of their children.
- Provide their children with the scholastic materials e.g. exercise books, pens.
- Ensure that the children are fed and are healthy and provide decent shelter.
- Reduce the domestic chores the children must do to avail them time to do homework and revise their notes and encourage them to do so.
- Ensure that homework is done and give them any help the children may need.
- Monitor the TV and radio programs the children watch and listen to and engage them in constructive discussions.
- Be interested in their children, talk to them and show interest in their schoolwork and encourage them to work hard.

### **Fellow teacher trainers**

All the respondents agreed that the trainers should act as the role models for the trainees and that they should do all their duties diligently.

Admissions of students to teacher training institutions should be done with a lot of care. They should admit students who have a sound background and those who are interested in the teaching profession.

These teacher trainers advised that teacher trainees be equipped with methods and content that would enable them to do a good job in the field and with life skills that would help them survive comfortably in the world outside college.

They should be practical and show their students how to go about teaching all the subjects effectively through improvisation using the natural materials found in the field.

They should encourage the teacher trainees to be positive, love their jobs and do them in the best way possible.

### **THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON THE COMMUNITY IN THE IGANGA DISTRICT**

The teacher trainers affirmed that poverty is widespread and has affected the community and the learners in various ways. They said that the urban population is better off than the rural population. Most of them have jobs and they get some

income. They can afford buying food and other household items. Most of them are educated and they value education. Thus they take their children to good schools and pay the school fees enabling the schools to put in place conditions, which enhance learning. They provide the necessary requirements, help with homework and generally support their children in school. This enables their children to perform well in school. Consequently the urban children stand chances of going to university or training colleges and getting good jobs in future.

But, they said, not all urban dwellers are employed in well paying jobs and can afford the best schools. But even those in poor jobs do their best because they have the stamina. They want their children to get the educated and hopefully get better jobs than theirs. Hence they are willing to pay some money to the schools. The money paid is then used to motivate the teachers.

These respondents said that poverty has hit the rural areas severely because the people depend on farming but the land has been used by many generations and is no longer very productive. The income they get from it, if any, is very little. Some people cannot even produce enough for their domestic consumption. There are homes where a family is not sure of the next meal. The respondents informed me that in such situations, a home might survive on one meal a day. This is a common practice when rains fail. Usually when a family has no food they get what to eat by working for other people who will either give them some money or some foodstuffs.

It is because of the intense poverty that they cannot afford to pay school fees let alone buy the scholastic requirements for their children. They said that the intense poverty has made many of them give up on education. Most of them feel that even if they put in so much for their children in primary school they will not afford the secondary education, which is not subsidised by government.

These educators told me that poverty has had far reaching impact in several aspects of life. They observed that many parents have forced their daughters out of school and 'sold' them off (marrying them off prematurely) so that they can get some money for survival. In some cases these girls have been married off to very old men and sometimes to those with HIV/AIDS fuelling its spread.

Poverty has also enhanced the rural-urban drift as the young boys and girls move to urban areas in hope of getting some employment. In the process some have ended up taking drugs and becoming gangsters. They concluded that all in all poverty has reduced the life span as people easily die as a result of preventable diseases.

## APPENDIX D

### GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH PARENTS

1. Are you happy with your children's performance?
2. Why/why not?
3. How do you compare the performance of these schools with those other schools in the Iganga district?
4. What do you think are the causes of this difference?
5. What can be done to narrow the gap that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and the urban learners?
6. What language do you use at home?
7. What are the literacy practices your children are involved in at home? What are some of the reading and writing activities that take place in your homes?
8. How do you endeavour to assist your child/ children in order to enable them perform well in school? Do you help them with homework?
9. Do you interact with your children? What are the topics you usually talk about? What Language do you use? Do you expect children to argue with you or to express their opinion while you are talking to you?
10. What would you like to be the medium of instruction (MOI) for the learners? Why?

11. What do you think is the impact of MOI on the learners' academic achievements especially in Primary Leaving Examination (PLE)?
12. The language policy in education states that... What are your views about that?
13. What are your expectations about your child's/children's education in general?
14. What are your roles in this process?
15. Would high exposure to literacy practices in English (such as watching TV programs, drama shows, listening to radio programs in English...) affect the learners' achievements in academic tasks? In what way?
16. Do your children watch TV/listen to radio programs? What specific programs do they watch/listen to most? Do you discuss these programs with your children?
17. What recommendations would you give the following people: a) the head teachers b) the teachers c) the teacher trainers d) the policy makers e) fellow parents in as far as the performance of your children in school is concerned?
18. The impact of poverty on the community in the Iganga district

## **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH PARENTS**

I held four focus group discussions with parents. Two were with rural and the other two with urban parents. I asked each head teacher of the selected school to get me two parents with children either in P 3 or P 6 with whom I could discuss issues pertaining to children's performance in school. In four of the five urban schools I was lucky to get eight parents who had children in both classes. One of the parents from the fifth school had a child in P 3 and the other had one in P 6. I divided them into two groups of five parents each. I held the two discussions with each group on the same day but in different venues. The two groups did not meet in between the two discussions. These are the responses that I got from the parents from the urban area.

### **1. Parents' comments about the children's achievements: Are you happy with your children's performance?**

All the parents said they were very happy with their children's performance.

### **2. Why/why not?**

Here I got several responses:

Parents said they are happy because their children pass their examinations very well. They take home good reports. They said that the numbers in the classes are manageable and teachers in these schools get to know the children personally. One parent said that when you talk to the teachers they can tell you facts about your child and you will be convinced that they are talking about your child. They said that one other thing that makes them happy is that their older children who have gone through these schools continue doing very well in secondary schools. One parent offered an explanation: "that means that the foundation they get in these primary schools is very good".

### **3. Comparing the performance of particular schools with those other schools in the Iganga district**

The parents conceded that there were few schools that perform well and noted that there were only 5 schools in the Iganga district that were in their own category characterised by excellent performance. These are the ones that perform well in the national examination, the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE). These five usually get almost all their P 7 candidates passing in the first grade and one or two candidates may get second grade but it will be a super second grade. For a long time now these schools have not had any candidate in third or fourth grade while a few of the remaining schools get some candidates who perform well most of the schools hardly get any first grade passes. In some schools the best candidates are usually second or even third grades and they have so many failures. The urban parents added that they are very proud of these schools.

#### **4. Causes of the difference in the schools' performance**

The urban parents gave the following reasons for the disparity.

They said that much as the urban schools are also UPE schools, (in 1996 the government of Uganda declared free Universal Primary Education. Parents are not supposed to pay any school fees. They are required to look after their children's welfare and supply scholastic materials. UPE became effective in 1997) the parents pay some money to the schools. This makes the schools to have more money and that enables the administration to do several things including buying more textbooks and other learning materials for the learners to supplement those supplied by government. These schools also buy more reference books for the teachers. This means that both the teachers and the learners have more access to content knowledge.

These parents also explained that the school administration use some of the funds the parents pay to give an additional amount to the teachers. This gives the teachers more morale to work as it supplements their meagre income and eases their cost of living (a primary school class teacher in Uganda earns Shs105000/-to 150,000/- or US\$ 50 to US\$ 75 per month). In return these teachers put in more hours of earnest work. They teach from 7:00 am and attend to the learners even up to 6:30 pm in the evening. These teachers work that hard because the conditions in these schools are much better than in other schools and none would opt to lose their jobs in such schools. In essence these schools are so marketable that they end up having only well-trained and excellent teachers only. This makes their quality of work also good.

These schools are also able to provide teachers accommodation by building teachers' houses in the school compounds or renting for them in the school neighbourhood. This means that the teachers stay within or very close to the schools. They do not have to travel long distances to school like their counter parts in the rural schools who reside in their homes, which are sometimes as far as six to ten kilometres away from schools. Thus, the urban teachers start their work when they are fresh and they can work for long hours without worrying about trekking back to their homes after hours of work. In addition these teachers are given lunch at school and therefore they teach in the afternoon when they are strong. The learners are also fed at school. They do not have to run home for lunch or to study on empty stomachs as their counter parts in the rural schools do.

The urban parents expounded that the money they pay has also helped to control the enrolment in these schools. This makes the numbers of the learners in the classes manageable by the teachers in the school. One parent said that when the numbers become big in a class the management body advises the head teacher to employ a few more teachers who are now paid by the school to ease the load for the teachers.

These parents pointed out (and I observed) that these schools have better amenities in form of well constructed and furnished buildings for classrooms, libraries, halls, clean water and electricity. These facilities make life comfortable for both the learners and the teachers. Thus the environment is more conducive for learning than in the rural areas where some classes study under trees. Here the classes have furniture and shutters so that charts, maps, reading cards and other learning material are left in classes for learners to read and internalise the content in their free time. This is not possible in rural schools where even the few classes do not have enough seats for the pupils, no shutters hence no learning materials can be left behind for learners to work with.

In addition these parents said that they endeavour to buy textbooks and all the requirements for their children. Their children use the books and materials they buy both at school and at home. This means that these children have more practice with books and hence they get to develop supportive literacy practices.

Another reason that was given for the difference was that the urban parents see to it that any homework the children take home is done. They guide the children or if they are unable they get somebody to help and guide their children as they do the homework. All the parents in the two urban groups were educated and said they were capable of going through homework with their children.

##### **5. Suggestions for narrowing the gap that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and the urban learners**

This item also brought forward several responses recorded below:

The urban parents suggested that there was need to mobilise and sensitise the rural parents and make them realise the importance of education. To let them view it as an investment where one is supposed to inject capital before getting any profit. They should be willing to pay some money which will enable the school administration to do some of those things mentioned in number four above.

They held the view that teachers should be paid more than what they get at the moment. This can be done by government and parents, either way it will lift the morale of the rural teachers as it will raise their meagre income and eases their cost of living.

There is need to organise refresher courses, workshops and seminars in which teachers will be shown new and/or other methods that help improve their teaching.

These parents observed that it is difficult for teachers to teach and children to learn when they are hungry. This is why they pay more money to make sure their children and the teachers are fed while they are at school. But they said this is not the case in

rural schools. After both teachers and pupils walking long distances to school in the morning those who cannot run back for lunch have to stay at school for the whole day teaching and learning until they go back home in the evening. Feeding the children and the teachers can enable them to stay longer in school and enhance learning.

Government funds remitted to schools should be increased and sent promptly to enable the schools carry on well. It was observed that the government takes months without sending any funds to schools (at the time I collected the data the schools had spent the period of June-October without receiving any money from government). This makes life very difficult, as sometimes the head teachers have to borrow chalk.

It was suggested that the government continues supplying the learning/ teaching materials to school and when doing so it should consider the schools' enrolment so that the sharing ratio reduces especially in (I found that on the average textbook were being shared at the ratio of 1:6 or 7) the rural schools.

It was further suggested that both the government and the school administration should endeavour to provide accommodation for the staff in rural areas. At the moment there are schools without a single staff house. Teachers reside in their homes. Such schools cannot get teachers of their choice, as they cannot accommodate them. They have to do with those from the school vicinity. Yet even in such cases some teachers have to travel as far as six to ten kilometres away from school. These teachers get to school tired, work hungry all day long and, are anxious to get home; they end up leaving school as early as 3:00 pm.

It was also suggested that absenteeism on part of the head teachers should be reduced. They said that head teachers need to be in schools more often than some do at the moment in order to supervise the school activities more closely and also teach some subjects. This would make the teachers do more work. These parents said that it is a common practice that in the absence of the headteacher the teachers tend to lax and take to gossiping instead of teaching.

The urban parents suggested that there was need to “resuscitate” the inspectorate section of the district education office. It is the responsibility of this section to inspect schools and see what is on the ground and ensure that proper teaching is being done. According to the parents these officers do not play their roles any more.

These parents suggested that the school management bodies should be strengthened by having some youthful and enlightened members who would monitor the school activities, and lobby for help, financial or otherwise, to ensure that the schools are run effectively and productively. At the moment, it appears that many schools have management bodies with very old members who are easily manipulated by the head teachers. In such cases the head teachers “end up managing the management bodies instead”.

## **6. The languages parents use at home with their children**

Seven of the ten parents said they speak English with their children at home. The three said they use both their first languages and English but hastened to add that in matters concerning education they strictly use English. I asked them why they have chosen to use mainly English with the children. Two said they married spouses from different ethnic groups and were using English even before the children were born. The rest said it was because they wanted their children to get on well in school "...you see good/urban schools teach in English, if you are planning to take your child to such a school then it is important that by the time the child goes there s/he can speak the language of the classroom and understand what the teachers teach. These schools also have children from all over the country and they speak different languages so for a child to get on well with the other children they need to know English". I went ahead and asked the seven parents whether they ever speak to their children in L1. They said that they do but usually only when in company of people they think that they do not understand English such as the grandparents of the children. I further asked them whether the children can express themselves in their first languages and they said they 'thought they can though not so fluently'. Two of them said they were sure their children knew very little beyond the greetings.

## **7. The literacy practices the urban children are involved in at home: some of the reading and writing activities that take place in urban homes**



The urban parents said that first and foremost they make sure that any form of homework is done. Eight of them said they buy newspapers almost everyday (the other two said they buy them at least from Monday to Friday) and after they have read they let their children read and then discuss any salient issues with them. All of the parents who took part in this study said they had bought some textbooks for their children and they encourage them to read them and to revise the notes they get at school. Four parents acknowledged that they give their children other exercises to do at home in addition to what is brought home as home work from school.

They said they take off some time and discuss academics with their children. They added that sometimes, during holidays, they encourage their children to discuss academic work such as examination past papers with peers from other school. They said that they encourage the younger children to consult their older siblings on academic work. In addition they said they watch TV and listen to radio and discuss current affairs with their children. Two parents said they had on many occasions observed their children taking notes as they listen to radio and watch TV. They said that these children are sometimes asked to write, cost and use shopping lists and to write down telephone and other messages left by callers and visitors who come when the parents are not at home. They also write messages for the children like when they know that the children will get home when the parents are not at home.

## **8. How the parents endeavour to assist their child/children in order to enable them perform well in school**

The urban parents said that they make all possible effort to see that they do whatever is required of them. They pay school fees promptly. This makes it possible for the school to get learning materials in time and to pay the teachers so that they are motivated to do their job diligently. They buy all the learning material that are required of them such as pen, exercise books and do their best to help the children as they do the homework or at least to ensure that it is done. They said that when they feel that they are unable to help with homework they get a teacher from the neighbourhood or a sibling to see that homework is done correctly. They set aside study times when the children should settle down and do some academic work and ensure that the time is well spent. In addition they visit the school and discuss their children's progress with the teachers. Above all, they said, they make sure the children are well fed and healthy.

## **9. Parent-child interaction, the topics for discussion**

### **Do you interact with your children?**

All the urban parents conceded that they  interact freely with their children.

### **The topics**

They said that they discuss school work, current affairs, radio and TV programs, HIV/AIDS related issues, sports, social issues, home environment, school life, social and domestic chores, the dos and the do nots of our culture, family development and progress in general.

### **The Language used during the interaction (see item 6 above).**

### **Parents' attitudes towards their children's participation in discussion with them**

The urban parents said they listen to their children and expect them to fully participate in discussions with them and to express their opinions. They said that they argue with them when they have a 'hot' topic for discussion. Two parents said they intentionally introduce controversial topics to engage their children in critical analysis of issues and this has helped their children to do well in school.

However, all of them said they always try to see that at the end of it all they guide their children's perspectives correctly. One parent said she sends her children to youth seminars and when they come back she discusses with them what they have

learnt from the seminars and then encourages them to implement what they were taught.

#### **10. Parents' views about the medium of instruction (MOI) for the learners and the reasons for their choices**

All the urban parents said that medium of instruction should be English. All emphasised that

“there is no compromise on that”. They said that they wanted their children to pass highly the national exams, which are set and answered in English. “The children have to be very conversant with English in order to excel in these exams. ... Our children need to master English they have to communicate beyond our own languages and beyond Lusoga because you never know where they will live. Many of us are not Basoga but we are living here; how can we tell where our children will live... English will enable them to communicate in more than half of the world...”

They wanted their children to belong to the ‘global’ world, to be able to communicate with other people wherever they go, to have communicative ability that transcends their ethnic boundaries.

They noted that mastering English early in their lives gives them confidence as they do their studies because they can read textbooks, write their exercises correctly and see that they are progressing well. They can read other materials such as newspapers, notices, posters from which they access information and knowledge that helps them consolidate what they learn in class, build vocabulary, get used to spelling, tenses and structures and all these are very useful in their academic work (i.e. develops their literacy practices).

They told me that English opens their future prospects. As they excel in schools their opportunities of pursuing further education are higher and they are likely to excel in schools and university and get good jobs and assail to the high rungs of society.

As English is used as the MOI these learners get the syllabus content in English directly, they are trained to think in English. This saves learning time, as they do not have to get the content and think in L1 and then translate it into English before presenting it in exercises and exams. It is also important as some words and concepts, which are part of the content; do not have equivalents in most L1s. They gave words like photosynthesis, oxygen and noun as examples, which the teacher would have to use long explanations to make children understand.

#### **11. Views about the impact of MOI on the learners' academic achievements especially in Primary Leaving Examination (PLE)**

These parents said that MOI has a very strong impact on learners' achievements, especially, in Uganda where the national academic competition starts as early as the seventh year of education. They explained that the national examinations are set in English and the learners are expected to do them using English. They said that this means that the learners' performance will, therefore, depend on how well the learners can express themselves in the language of examinations.

They concluded that the 'right' MOI should facilitate fast grasping, interpretation of the content being taught and its presentation during examination. It saves a lot of time and teachers' efforts as they may not have to labour much to get points across to the learners. It also saves the learners a lot of time and confusion they would face in order to grasp, translate and then present the content in exercises and exams. They added that it can help to reduce spelling errors the learners make.

**12. The language in education policy states, in part, that:**

*In rural areas the medium of instruction from P 1 to P 4 will be the relevant local languages; from P 5 to P 8 English will be the medium of instruction.*

*In urban areas the medium of instruction will be English throughout the primary cycle.*

*English will be the medium of instruction from senior one (S1) onwards.*



(P 8 has not yet been put in place. PLE is done at the end of P 7 and marks the end of the primary cycle.)

**Parents' views about the language in education policy**

They all said that the policy is unfair and advanced the following explanations. One parent said that as long as academic achievement is the target then "...the end justifies the means. Exams are set in English so the teaching should be done in English". They said that all Ugandan learners take the same national exams set in one language. To be fair they should be all subjected to the same conditions. They argued that the three years the rural children have to effectively use English as MOI are not enough to bring them to the same linguistic level as their urban counter parts or to make them internalise it well enough to be able to express themselves and compete fairly with the urban learners.

They said that they were aware L1 is important in cultural and identity development and should be promoted, but they hastened to ask whether the urban children do not

need the cultural development and identity. They agreed that fully aware of that, they choose “to talk to them in English for the reasons we gave above.” (See number 6).

They conceded that, if anything, they need it even more because many of them do not get it at home but they affirmed that at the moment they are focused on education. One put it thus: ‘we will work on the other things later’. They stressed that the children need a ‘solid’ foundation in education if they are to cope with the rigours of a competitive world.

One parent said that he has read somewhere that teaching using L1 in the early years of education is very good as it enables the learners to develop the concepts clearly in mother tongue but “... what puzzles me is why rural children who are taught using mother tongue for many years never beat the urban ones who are taught in English right from the pre-primary years when it comes to exams.” They all concluded that the only plausible explanation was the linguistic diversity found in the cosmopolitan urban schools that necessitates a unifying language to be used as MOI so that all the learners can benefit equally.

### **13. The expectations parents have of their children’s education**

These parents said that they expect good performance. They want their children to excel in exams, be knowledgeable, do well even in higher education and finally get good jobs. They expect them to be disciplined, have good manners, be patriotic, understand the environment and be able to use it to their advantage, have life skills so that they can create jobs and be confident enough to sustain themselves in life.

### **14. The parents’ roles in the education process of their children**

The urban parents enumerated the following as the roles they have to play in the process of educating their children:

- To pay fees promptly.
- Instil discipline in their children
- Provide all the necessary requirements expected of them.
- Check on their children’s progress in school.
- Interact with the teachers and get the feed back and advice and co-operate with the teachers to help the children to do well in school.
- Interact with the children at home and engage them in fruitful academic and social discussions.
- Ensure that homework is done as required.
- Encourage, inspire ambition and help them set targets and be focused.
- Know their children’s capability and interest.
- Set for them realistic challenges after identifying their children’s capability and interest.

- Give career guidance without imposing their wishes on them.
- Counsel them so that they take their education seriously.

**15. The affect of high exposure to literacy practices in English (such as watching TV programs, drama shows, listening to radio programs in English...) on the learners' achievements in academic tasks**

For this item we got both yes and no as responses.

The urban parents said that if used well such exposure would enhance the learners' achievement in academic tasks. They said that there are radio and TV have programs in which some of the topics on the syllabus are discussed fully by experts in those specific fields. They said that in such cases the content given in class would be enriched and internalised by the exposed learners. These parents were of the view that listening to and watching such experts would be very inspiring for the learners so that some of them would be motivated to study hard to become as affluent as the discussants. Another point given was that these practices would equip the learners with more vocabulary and structures, which would improve the language/expression in general so that when it comes to writing exams they would have the right tools to express themselves.

They added that reading newspapers, magazines books and the adverts, which appear on the TV screens, would help the children work on their spelling and also increase their knowledge. Furthermore, they said that the exposure would stimulate the learners thinking ability and develop their speed in the listening, reading and speaking skills. They observed that those skills are vital in the learning experience because they are in constant play in the classroom situation.

On the other hand, these parents expressed fear that if the exposure is not monitored it would end up consuming all the free time the learners would otherwise use to revise their notes or do their home work. They said that left unattended to these youngsters tend to be taken in by music and movies and end up not gaining much other than improving the listening skill.

The parents observed that in case of movies (such as the blue movies) these practices can easily erode morals and the learners will end up spending hours musing about what they saw instead of paying attention to what is being taught in class. They also noted that where lots of candid information is given, for example about HIV/AIDS, some learners who might have intentionally or unintentionally engaged in precarious activities might feel insecure and/or unsure of their status and want to give up or just lose interest in education and life in general because they suspect that they may be sick while they may not be courageous enough to go for testing. Alternatively the hitherto innocent might be tempted to venture into experimentation.

**16. The urban children's exposure to TV and to radio programs. The specific programs they watch/listen to most and the parents' interaction with their children about these programs.**

These parents said that their children watch TV and listen to radio programs. They said that they watch/listen to news, educational programs, political issues, sports, music and films. They said that they discuss some of the programs like those just mentioned but they are sometimes shy to discuss others, e.g. those related to sexual affairs. Three parents pointed out that they try to screen the programs their children watch.

**17. The parents' recommendation:**

- a) **The head teacher**
- b) **The teachers**
- c) **The teacher trainers**
- d) **The policy makers**
- e) **Fellow parents**

**in as far as the performance of your children in school is concerned?**

**The head teachers**



The urban parents recommended that the head teachers should endeavour to improve their own academic levels through upgrading. They should trust their deputies and learn to delegate duties such as opening up bookstores when they (the head teachers) are off station on official duties. They should groom successors for continuity purposes. They should be present more often in school and they should also teach some subjects to show solidarity as part of the team.

**The teachers**

The following recommendations were given for the teachers:

- Teach diligently and effectively.
- Be focused; upgrade to seek new knowledge and new methods.
- Plan the work and master the content to be delivered.
- Know their learners, value them and handle accordingly.
- Discourage chorus answers.
- Be exemplary e.g. by working hard and behaving well.
- They should not give up the weak learners but find ways of helping them improve.

### **The teacher trainers**

These were advised to equip teacher trainees with methods and content that would enable them to do a good job in the field and to equip them with life skills that would help them survive comfortably in the world outside college.

### **The policy makers**

The recommendations for the policy makers were:

- Visit the field to know what goes on there and tailor the policies according to realities.
- Disseminate information so that teacher, parents, head teachers and the community know what is expected of them.
- Resuscitate and facilitate school inspection.
- Raise the teachers salary in order to motivate them and reduce the gap between the head teachers' and the teachers' salaries (the head teachers get between Ushs400000/-and 600000/- a month while the teachers get between Ushs105000/- and 150000/- per month).

### **Fellow parents**



These were the recommendations which were advanced for parents:

- Invest in education by paying some money that can enable the schools to run smoothly, e.g. to be able to buy chalk when the government funds are delayed.
- Provide their children with the scholastic materials e.g. exercise books, pens.
- Ensure that the children are fed and are healthy.
- Reduce the domestic chores the children must do to avail them time to do homework and revise their notes.
- Ensure that homework is done and give them any help they may need.
- Monitor the media especially TV and radio.
- Make sure the children are disciplined.

### **RURAL PARENTS**

There were two focus groups of five parents each. Each group had three fathers and two mothers. Four of them had children in both P 3 and P 6; three had children in P 3 and the other three in P 6. I held the discussions with each group on the same day but in different venues. The two groups did not meet in between the two discussions. These are the responses that were got from the parents from the rural areas.

### **1 Parents' comments about the children's achievements: Are you happy with your children's performance?**

All the parents said they were not happy.

### **2 Why not?**

They said they were not happy because the children in the rural schools hardly do well, "...they never get division one, you find that in most cases the best get second grade and even those who get second grade are not very many. In most schools the grade four and failure are more than those who get the first three grades. We keep asking ourselves 'are all the children in the rural areas foolish?'"

### **3 Comparing the performance of particular schools with those other schools in the Iganga district**

Both groups of the parents said that while children in some schools especially those in the urban area perform well and pass their exams, those in rural areas perform very poorly.

### **4 Causes of the difference in the schools' performance**



Most of the reasons these parents gave were similar to those the urban parents had given. They said that it seems both the head teachers and the teachers have succumbed to 'fate/given up trying to make the children pass'. They further said that the head teachers spend little time in the school and the teachers tend to relax when the head teachers are absent.

They also said that most rural schools are not able to accommodate teachers in the school compound or to rent for them houses in the school neighbourhood. This means that the teachers stay in their homes that, in some cases, are very far from the schools and the teachers have to walk or ride bicycles for long distances to school. They conceded that sometimes the homes are as far as six to ten kilometres away from schools. Thus, by the time the teachers reach school and start their work, they are already tired and they work while all the time worrying about trekking back to their homes after long hours of work. They observed that a good number of the teachers and the pupils arrive at school late, some as late as 9:30 am when the lessons officially begin at 8:00 am and leave as early as 3:00 pm when classes are supposed to end at 4:00 pm and schools to close at 5:00 pm after cleaning and co-curricula activities. These teachers have little contact time with the learners implying that they may not be able to cover the syllabus leave alone doing any remedial work. They were doubtful whether with that exhaustion and anxiety the teachers can really be very effective.

These parents acknowledged that they are poor and since the government declared primary school free (UPE which took effect in 1997) they do not pay any money to the schools. They agreed that while some people do not pay because they genuinely do not have others are just not bothered. Those in the later category reason that they have no hope of seeing their children go beyond primary school for two reasons. 1) Children in the rural areas never pass exams well enough to go to good secondary schools where they could excel and eventually get good jobs which would give the both social and economic mobility. 2) Even if the children passed the parents would not be able to pay the fees required for secondary and university education.

In addition the discussants admitted that many of their fellow parents in these rural schools either cannot afford to buy all the scholastic materials required by the children or they do not want to. A good number of their children go to school without exercise books, or pens and therefore do not do any exercises in class or homework.

In line with this the parents conceded that the majority are illiterate. In that case even if their children brought home homework they would not be in position to help or guide them in any way. They pointed out that the children come home late and tired and some of them just dose when they are given time to do the homework.

Another factor these parents brought up was that the rural schools do not provide lunch for teachers. Therefore, most teachers teach in the afternoon when they are hungry. Those who live close to the schools have to go home for their lunch increasing the chances of either coming back late for the afternoon lessons or not coming back at all. The learners, too, are not fed at school. They either have to run home for lunch or to study on empty stomachs. Like their teachers, some of those who go for lunch may either come back late for the afternoon lessons or they may not come back at all. This is not the case for their counter parts in the urban schools who are given lunch at school.

The rural parents also pointed out that due to poverty the conditions in the homes are not very conducive to learning. The feeding is not as good as that in the urban homes where the parents have steady income and can afford a minimum of three decent/ balanced meals a day. Malnourished children are not a rare sight in rural areas. The rural population neither has access to electricity nor clean water and many of them still depend on local herbs for medication. In most cases the children are in poor health state.

Besides the appalling conditions at home these parents said that the conditions in the rural schools also contribute to the poor performance of the learners. The rural schools lack facilities such as libraries, furniture, and enough textbooks. (I did not see any library in the rural schools. The books the government supplied were stuck in the head teachers' offices or heaped in small rooms referred to as bookstores). In some schools some classes study under trees for lack of buildings. Some children sit on the

ground and write with the books placed either on the ground or on their laps for lack of furniture. They added that the textbooks supplied by government are not enough and children have to crowd around the few if they are to use them because the numbers of pupils in the classes are big making the sharing ratio high.

Another touchy point these parents raised was the meagre salaries paid to the teachers. These parents expressed concern about the salary the government pays the primary school teachers (a primary school class teacher in Uganda earns Shs105000/- to 150,000/- or US\$ 50 to US\$ 75 per month). They said that that money is so little that it demoralises the teachers as it cannot facilitate decent living (“...the teachers have to look for alternatives to make sure they cope with life”). They said that the urban teachers work harder because they get some more money from the school administration to supplement their salaries. They confessed that unlike the urban parents who pay fees to the schools the rural parents do not therefore the administration has no way of supplementing the teachers’ salaries. They went on to say that their inability to pay any money to the schools was the reason for lack of facilities in these schools. They blamed it all on the rampant poverty that is rife in the rural areas.

The rural parents also said that the rural learners lack focus due to the fact that there are not many role models to inspire them. This is because of the rural-urban drift. Those who are left in the rural areas have almost nothing to inspire the youngsters as they live in abject poverty. They have no hope of accessing better life. This, in addition, to their conditions of living makes them perform poorly. In turn the constant poor results discourage/frustrate any good teachers and they end up seeking employment elsewhere.

## **5 Suggestions for narrowing the gap that exists between the academic achievements of the rural and the urban learners**

The first response to this question was that a lot needs to be done to sensitise parents and make them realise that much as they are poor “...education is an investment. It needs capital before one can realise any profits”. They need to pay some money to schools. It is such monies that enable the school administrations to put in place facilities such as buildings, textbooks, furniture which improves the conditions so that the learning experience can be more pleasant for the learners and the teachers. It is from such money that the head teachers can use to pay some token, however small, to the teachers in order to raise their morale and help them solve some of their problems so that they can concentrate on the school work. Part of that money can also be used to provide lunch for both the teachers and the pupils so that they can teach and learn comfortably in the afternoon sessions and stay longer in school thus having more time to help the weak learners.

Related to that, these respondents suggested that the money sent to schools by government should be increased and be sent to schools in good time so that it can be put to proper use instead of making the head teachers operate on debts.

Secondly, they said that one of the major mishaps was that these rural schools teach in Lusoga, the main L1 in the Iganga district. They said, "...even P 7 is taught in Lusoga in some schools yet they are being prepared to do the national exams which they must write in English! If the learners are not given practice in the language of the exams how can they be expected to read and understand the questions and write the answers correctly?" The parents further observed that even the teachers speak mainly Lusoga yet they would be the only models from whom the children would learn the correct pronunciations of the English words. They pointed out that they use Lusoga at home with their children because it is what they know therefore they would like their children to learn English in order to be able to pass exams or at least to show that they 'have gone to school'.

These parents suggested that all the stakeholders need to work together. There should be co-operation between the teachers, head teachers, parents and the learners. All parties involved need to put in effort and do whatever is required of them diligently. The head teachers should be in school most of the time and when they must be away they should delegate their deputies to carry on with what needs to be done such as making the books available so that teaching goes on normally. The teachers should do their best to make sure that the syllabi are covered, learners' books are marked and remedial work is done. The parents should ensure that they provide all the requirements their children need for effective learning to take place. They should also visit the schools, talk to the teachers to check on their children's progress, keep on encouraging their children to work hard and find ways and means of helping the children with homework. The pupils, on their part, should gain interest and confidence and put in effort to learn.

In addition the rural parents said that the rural school head teachers should organise and, together with the teachers, visit the urban school to find out exactly what makes those schools perform as well as they do. Copying the strategies used in urban schools would help the rural schools to improve. They said that it would also be good for the learners to visit those good schools, interact with those learners and learn from them. All of them should visit other schools on open days, interact with other people and gain exposure that would enrich their knowledge and experience.

## **6 The languages parents use at home with their children**

They all conceded that they speak Lusoga, the language of the area because it is the only one they know. Even the two who admitted knowing a bit of English said they do not speak it with their children.

## **7 The literacy practices which the rural children are involved in at home: some of the reading and writing activities that take place in the rural homes**

The rural parents said that it is rare to find the children in rural areas reading on their own. The common literacy practice their children engage in is revising their notes but this is usually done by a few and only during the examination period. In some few homes sometimes they do homework and discuss their schoolwork with their colleagues, some visitors and siblings. They also said that they listen to radio but mainly to L1 programs and sports.

## **8 How do the parents endeavour to assist their child/children in order to enable them perform well in school**

The respondents said that they make sure they send the children to school but they divulged that they hardly check on what happens at school. About providing the scholastic materials they said that they want to do a lot but in most cases they are incapacitated by lack of resources. “But we try and provide at least two or three exercise books, pencils and pens when we can.” When we asked them about buying textbooks they said that that was ‘more than a dream’ because those books cost ‘a fortune, the kind of money we cannot afford’.

They said that when the children take homework (which is rare) they tell them to do it mainly after supper but sometimes the children just dose off because they are already tired. They admitted that in some homes the children have to dig or do some domestic chores before they go to school and in the evening when they come back. Three of these parents said that they try to help when the children are in lower classes ‘...but when things get tough we ask the older siblings to help, or we just leave it to the teachers...’.

I went ahead and asked these parents whether they ever check their children’s books. Three said they had never bothered, four said they never did because they would not understand any thing as they did not go to school themselves, the other three said they look at the books once in a while “... just to see whether there are any ticks.”

## **9 Parent-child interaction, the topics for discussion**

### **Do you interact with your children?**

I got varying responses to this question. The four mothers said they interact with the children though they (the mothers) are the ones who do the talking most of the time. Two fathers said their children hardly talk to them. When I asked them why, they said that it seems the children fear them “... even when you ask them a question they

respond with the shortest answer possible and go away”. The remaining four conceded that they interact with the children but not as much as their mothers do. They said that sometimes they get home when the children are already asleep. During the holidays and weekends the children are usually with their mothers. But they all conceded that it is not a habit for children to sit and chat with adults.

### **The topics**

The mothers said they make sure they tell their big children how to behave and how to conduct themselves in various situations in society. They warn them against HIV/AIDS, early pregnancy and advise them to work hard at school. The mothers said that they tell the younger children folk stories, riddle and even just conversing with them. The fathers who talk to their children said they talk about their economic status, and sometimes about some of the current issues in politics and what happens in the society around them.

**The Language used during the interaction** (see item 6 above).

### **Parents’ attitudes towards their children’s participation in discussion with them**

All the parents agreed that they do not expect their children to argue with them “... because in our culture that is not acceptable. They can talk to us politely but not to argue. As for expressing their opinion, this can only be if the opinion has been solicited say by a question”.

### **10 Views about the medium of instruction (MOI) for the learners and the reasons for their choices**

Two of the rural parents said that they want their children to be taught mother tongue “... at least in the lower classes and then in English from P 3 when they are used to school”. The rest said they want their children taught in English most of the time like the urban but where the children seem not to understand then the L1 can be used to clarify what is being taught. All of them, however, agreed that they wanted English very much because the urban children who are taught in English pass their exams highly at all levels. They added that they wanted their children to be able to express themselves in English to show that they have been to school.

### **11 Views about the impact of MOI on the learners’ academic achievements especially in Primary Leaving Examination (PLE)**

The rural parents acknowledged the MOI impacts on the academic performance of the learners because it makes them understand what is taught. They said that they

believe that the urban children performed better because the language used to teach them is the same as the one used in exams "... so they learn it thoroughly and use it well in exams and they pass. Ours are taught in mother tongue and when they read the questions they cannot understand them properly, they cannot write the answers correctly and they fail".

## **12 The language policy in education states that:**

*In rural areas the medium of instruction from P 1 to P 4 will be the relevant local languages; from P 5 to P 8 English will be the medium of instruction.*

*In urban areas the medium of instruction will be English throughout the primary cycle.*

*English will be the medium of instruction from senior one (S1) onwards.*

(P 8 has not yet been put in place. PLE is done at the end of P 7 and marks the end of the primary cycle.)

## **The parents' views about LEP**

The rural parents shared the views expressed by the urban parents that it is rather unfair and stressed that Uganda is one country and all the children are Ugandans and the asked why they should be subjected to different conditions and then be expected to compete favourable in exams and the job market. They observed that "... if any children needed to learn mother tongue then it was the urban children who do not know their languages because most of them speak English even at home." I told them that the policy was set like that because it has been found out that concepts mastered in L1 can easily be translated into L2 but they said that then it would be their children excelling but instead it is the urban children who do not get the concept in their mother tongue who excel. They insisted that they would appreciate even treatment.

## **13 The expectations parents have of their children's education**

The rural parents said that though their children do not pass well they also expect good performance. They want their children to excel in exams, be knowledgeable, do well even in higher education and finally get good jobs. They added that they can only expect their life to improve if their children got good jobs. That would make them capable of looking after them and educating their siblings. They expect these children to be disciplined, have good manners, be patriotic, understand the environment, have life skills so that they can create jobs and be confident enough to sustain themselves.

## **14 The parents' roles in their children's education process**

The rural parents specified the following as the roles they have to play in the process of educating their children:

- Provide all the necessary requirements expected of them as much as some might not be able to afford. They, however, reminded me that the level of poverty renders them helpless. They said that sometimes they are willing to provide the scholastic requirements but they do not have the money. They also said that they are unable to pay fees to the schools because of poverty.
- Good parents should check on their children's progress in school.
- Interact with the teachers and get the feed back and advice, co-operate with the teachers by following the advice given to them.
- Interact with the children at home and engage them in fruitful social discussions and show them that they are interested in their school work.
- Ensure that homework is done as required encourage the siblings to help and where possible get someone to help where the parents are not competent.
- Reduce the domestic chores the children have to do so that they can have time to read/revise their notes when they are not very tied.
- Encourage, inspire ambition and help them set targets and be focused by telling them that they can also perform as well as the urban learners do if they tried harder.

**15 The effect of high exposure to literacy practices in English (such as watching TV programs, drama shows, listening to radio programs in English...) on the learners' achievements in academic tasks**

They said they believe if children had that exposure it would help them master English and use it to understand what is taught, what they read, and answer the exam questions correctly. It would also make them access more information to supplement the content the teachers give them at school.

**16 The rural children's exposure to TV and to radio programs. The specific programs they watch/listen to most and the parents' interaction with their children about these programs.**

The rural parents said there are no TVs in the rural areas but most homes have radios. They said that the batteries are expensive to the extent that in many homes these

radios are a preserve for the fathers who buy the batteries so that they can listen to news. They said that there cases where the children can listen to the radios but they tend to listen to music, sports and drama. Both groups expressed antipathy for a program called “senga” meaning “aunt” which discusses sexual issues and the bemoaned that it is eroding the moral fibre of the youngsters. They lamented that in rural areas people listen to programs in local languages. They admitted that they rarely discuss the programs with their children though the fathers said that they sometimes tell the family about what they hear from the news broadcasts.

**17 The rural parents’ recommendations for:**

- a) The head teacher**
- b) The teachers**
- c) The teacher trainers**
- d) The policy makers**
- e) Fellow parents**

**in as far as the performance of their children in these school is concerned**

**Head teachers**



The rural parents recommended that the head teachers should be in school more often. They should also teach some subjects to show solidarity as part of the team. They suggested that they should trust their deputies and learn to delegate duties such as opening up bookstores when they (the head teachers) are off station on official duties. They should groom successors for continuity purposes. They should also be transferred to other schools because “...at present there are head teachers who have been in the same schools for even over twenty years without making any difference in the performances of those schools...” They should call and talk to the parents about the discipline of the children both at home and at school. It was also recommended that the head teachers should ensure good relationship between the administration, the teachers and the parents.

**The teachers**

The following recommendations were given for the teachers:

- Teach diligently and effectively.
- Be time conscious and instil rules and order in the classrooms.
- Be focused; upgrade to seek new knowledge and methods.
- Plan what to teach, follow it, know their content and use appropriate language to make the learners understand what is taught.
- Endeavour to complete the syllabus.

- They should not be complacent and give up trying to improve.
- Be exemplary e.g. by working hard and behaving well.
- They should not give up the weak learners but find ways of helping them improve.
- Try to find ways and means of improving their economic status.

### **The teacher trainers**

It was recommended that teacher training institutions admit students who have sound background not those who have failed to go anywhere else and those who are interested in the teaching profession. The teacher trainers were advised to equip teacher trainees with methods and content that would enable them to do a good job in the field and to equip them with life skills that would help them survive comfortably in the world outside college.

### **The policy makers**

The recommendations for the policy makers were:

- Visit the field to know what goes on there and tailor the policies according to realities.
- Reward the good performers advise and encourage the poor performers.
- Disseminate information so that teacher, parents, head teachers and the community know what is expected of them.
- Make fair policies for all Ugandan citizens
- Resuscitate and facilitate school inspection.
- Raise the teachers' salary in order to motivate them.
- Sensitise the parents in rural areas.

### **Fellow parents**

These were the recommendations which were advanced for parents:

- Work hard to uplift their income level.
- Be willing to invest in education by paying some money that can enable the schools to run the affairs of the school such as buying chalk when the government funds are delayed.
- Respect the head teacher and the teachers, listen to them and follow the advice they give and co-operate with them on academic and discipline matters.
- Provide their children with the scholastic materials e.g. exercise books, pens.
- Ensure that the children are fed and are healthy.

- Reduce the domestic chores the children must do to avail them time to do homework and revise their notes.
- Ensure that homework is done and give the children any help they may need.
- Monitor the programs the children listen to on radio.
- Be interested in their children, talk to them and show interest in their schoolwork and encourage them to work hard.

### **THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON THE COMMUNITY IN THE IGANGA DISTRICT**

The Iganga district is approximately 150 kilometres east of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. Hence it can be referred to as a ‘rural’ district. But it is a fact that every district in Uganda has both rural and urban settings.

These are views of the urban parents in the Iganga district. They asserted that although the situation in urban areas was not as grave as it was in the rural areas, poverty has affected both the rural and the urban area almost in one way or another.

The urban parents affirmed that poverty is widespread and has affected the community and the learners in various ways. They said that it is true that the urban population is better off than the rural population. Most of them have jobs, notwithstanding their nature; they have a source of income. They can afford buying food and other household items. Many of them can take their children to good schools and pay the school fees enabling the schools to put in place conditions, which enhance learning. They added that many of them could afford to continue paying for their children in good secondary schools. This enables the children to perform well in school and all of them were hopeful that their children stand chances of going to university or training colleges and getting good jobs in future.

However, they said that not all urban dwellers are employed in well paying jobs and can afford the best schools. But they said that the difference between the two groups of the population (the rural and the urban) is the stamina. People living in the urban centres are willing to do almost any job as long as it will give them some money. The urban population also values education so they are willing to pay some money to the schools. The money paid is then used to motivate the teachers “...and that is why you find that in most urban schools the learners perform well because the teachers put in a lot of effort since they are happy.”

#### **Rural parents**

The rural parents specifically pointed out that while the urban dwellers are willing to do any job and indeed they do, to earn income, they depend basically on farming which is at the mercy of the weather. They said that the land has been used by many

generations and is no longer very productive. The income they get from it, if any, is very little. Some people cannot even produce enough for their domestic consumption. This is why they are very poor and they cannot afford to pay school fees let alone buying the scholastic requirements for their children. They said that the intense poverty has made them give up on education. Most of them feel that even if they put in so much for their children in primary school they will not afford the secondary education, which is not subsidised by government.

Besides that kind of resignation, Poverty in rural areas of Uganda is cutting deep. There are homes where a family is not sure of the next meal and where a meal is for survival. In such situations, the respondents informed me that a home might survive on one meal a day. This is a common practice especially when rains fail. Usually when a family has no food they get what to eat by working for other people who will either give them some money or some foodstuffs.

I was informed and indeed I saw homes where the shelters were in pathetic conditions. The respondents told me that even getting cloths is difficult that is why people can barely cover their nakedness. I learnt that in some homes sugar is a luxury that cannot be afforded, in such homes if one can get some salt and a piece of soap once in a while then the rest can wait. These conditions make it easy for diseases to be rampant yet the people in such situations cannot afford medical treatment. I was made to understand that in rural areas local herbs are still used widely for treatment and that in some cases by the time the hospital is thought of it is too late.

The rural parents told me that poverty has had far reaching impact in several aspects of life. They observed that many parents have forced their daughters out of school and 'sold' them so that they can get some money for survival. In some cases these girls have been married off to very old men and sometimes to those with HIV/AIDS fuelling its spread. This poverty has also enhanced the rural-urban drift as the young boys and girls move to urban areas in hope of getting some employment. In the process some have ended up taking drugs and becoming gangsters. They concluded that all in all poverty has reduced the life span as people easily die as a result of preventable diseases, malnourishment or unbecoming habits.

## APPENDIX E

### GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH LEARNERS

1. The languages used by the teachers in class
2. The language(s) spoken by the teachers outside the class
3. Teacher-learner (T-L) interaction outside the class
4. Learners' views on learning in English
5. Languages used by the learners at school outside class and at home
6. Learners' views on learning through mother tongue (MT)
7. Child-parent (C-P) interaction
8. Quality of C-P and parents' attitude
9. Activities carried out in English at home and at school
10. The people whom the learners read, speak, write and/or listen to in English at home, in the home community and in the school community
11. Exposure to TV and radio programmes
12. Literacy practices at school and at home
13. Opportunities to develop literacy practices e.g. reading novels, plays, poems or newspapers on their own.
14. Access to library facilities at school, home and in the community
15. Learners' views on how practising English would help them in life, school and examinations
16. Learners' views on how practising mother tongue would help them in life, school and examinations
17. Whether the learners notice any difference between the performance of the urban and the rural schools

18. Learners' views on why schools in rural and urban areas perform the way they do
19. Reasons why the learners' schools perform the way they do
20. Learners' expectation from the education system
21. Recommendations to various people for maintaining/improving the standard of performance of the learners and bridging the gap between the rural and the urban schools' academic achievement
22. The learners views on the impact of poverty on the community and on the primary school learners

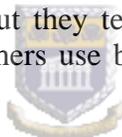


## **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH LEARNERS**

I held eight focus group discussions with learners from the target classes. I had two group discussions with P 3 and another two with P 6 learners from rural schools. I also held two group discussions with P 3 and another two with P 6 from urban schools. I decided to have two discussions with each category so that I could compare and enrich the information I got. This was in effort to establish the kinds of literacy practices in which the learners are involved, in the homes, at schools and in their communities. I also wanted to get data on the acculturation processes the children undergo. This was to enable me to establish and compare literacy practices that exist in the two dichotomous communities in a bid to find out whether and/or how those literacy practices impacted on the learners' academic achievements. All the groups were made of five learners, one from each school.

### **1. The languages used by the teachers in class**

The P 3 and the P 6 urban learners said that their teachers use English in both classes. P 3 rural learners said that their teachers use Lusoga but mention some English words as they teach especially in most of the subjects. They said that the teachers use English during the English lessons but they tell them some things in Lusoga. The rural P 6 learners said that their teachers use both languages 'but most of the time they use Lusoga'.



### **2. The language(s) spoken by the teachers outside the class**

The urban learners told me that their teachers speak English at school even when outside class. They went on to say that even when they meet them outside school they still speak to them in English.

For the rural learners it was the reverse. They said that "once outside the class is Lusoga full time." In two schools I noticed that there were some teachers who were not Basoga. (I had heard them speak Lusoga). I asked the learners from those schools whether those teachers also spoke Lusoga and they told me that they knew the language and they use it not only outside but also inside the classes.

### **3. Teacher-learner (T-L) interaction outside the class**

I asked the learners whether they interact with their teachers outside the classes, if so in what language and the topics they usually discussed.

**Table 1 shows the T-L interaction outside class**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Do you interact with teachers?</b>	<b>The language used</b>	<b>Topics discussed</b>
P 3 Urban	Yes	English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class work</li> <li>• Stories</li> <li>• TV programmes</li> <li>• Our future hopes</li> </ul>
P 3 Rural	Yes	Lusoga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending them on errands</li> <li>• Greetings</li> </ul>
P 6 Urban	Yes	English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class work</li> <li>• TV programmes</li> <li>• Future hopes</li> <li>• General topic about life</li> <li>• Sports.</li> <li>• Newspaper articles</li> <li>• “Anything else you like”</li> </ul>
P 6 Rural	Yes	Most of the time Lusoga and rarely a bit of English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending them on errands</li> <li>• Greetings</li> <li>• Sometimes about home</li> </ul>

#### **4. Learners’ views on learning in English**

I sought to find whether the learners thought that learning in English was important and the reasons for their views. All the learners said that learning through English was very important and they gave the following reasons.

- The exams are set in English and the learners are required to do them in English so they wanted to get the content in English.
- They want to have the language i.e. vocabulary and structure to use during exams and pass highly so that they can go to good schools.
- The textbooks and the other books such as novels are written in English. They want to be able to read for themselves and understand what they read.
- They want to learn English and be able to speak it well with other people.
- They want to be in position to compete for and get the good jobs so that they can be comfortable in future.

- It is the only language used in secondary school and at university. They want to get there when they already know it well.
- They want to be ‘important’.

*In Uganda a person who speaks English well is highly respected.*

### 5. Languages used by the learners at school outside class and at home

I wanted to know the languages the learners speak at school with friends outside class and at home.

**Table 2 shows the languages learners use outside class and at home**

Class	Language used at school outside class	Language used at home
P 3 Urban	English	English and (rarely) a little L1
P 6 Urban	English	English and (rarely) a little L1
P 3 Rural	Lusoga	Lusoga
P 6 Rural	Lusoga (A learner from F said they are forced to speak English but when they are out of the teachers hearing they speak Lusoga)	Lusoga

### 6. Learners’ views on learning through mother tongue (MT)

The learners from the urban school groups said they did not want to be taught through mother tongue except “maybe in P 1 but not in upper classes because “it would just waste our time and many of us do not know Lusoga.” I asked what their view would be if it was a language they all knew but they insisted saying that they wanted a language that would help them pass their exams well.

The learners from the rural schools said that it was okay to be taught through MT especially in P 1 and P 2. They said that by that time most of them do not know English and yet they want to understand what is taught. They said that in upper classes they would not mind learning it as a subject because they have to speak to their relatives who do not know English but they want to be taught in English because they have to do the exams in English. “You see if you know only Lusoga you cannot pass because you will not understand the questions and you will write broken English and you will be marked wrong and you fail,” one learner explained.

## 7. Child-parent (C-P) interaction

I asked the learners whether they interact with their parents and if so in what language and the topics they usually discussed. They said they interact with their parents but the rural learners observed that they interact mostly with their mothers because most of the time their fathers are away. Many of the P 3 learners said that in most cases their fathers come home when they are already asleep.

**Table 3 shows the C-P interaction**

Class	Do you interact with parents?	The language used	Topics discussed
P 3 Urban	Yes	English and rarely in a bit of L <sub>1</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class work</li> <li>• Telling stories</li> <li>• Just conversing</li> <li>• TV and radio programmes</li> <li>• Our future hopes</li> <li>• Anything else we like</li> </ul>
P 3 Rural	Yes	Lusoga 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending them on errands</li> <li>• Telling them about school</li> <li>• Telling us how to behave</li> </ul>
P 6 Urban	Yes	English and rarely in a bit of L <sub>1</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class work</li> <li>• TV and radio programmes</li> <li>• Future hopes</li> <li>• General topic about life</li> <li>• About HIV/AIDS</li> <li>• About the books we read</li> <li>• Sports.</li> <li>• Newspaper articles</li> <li>• Anything else we like</li> </ul>
P 6 Rural	Yes	Most of the time Lusoga and rarely a bit of English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending them on errands</li> <li>• Sometimes about school</li> <li>• Telling us how to behave</li> <li>• About HIV/AIDS</li> </ul>

## 8. Quality of C-P and parents' attitude

I asked the learners whether their parents expected them to argue with them and whether the parents value their children's opinion during their interactions. The urban

learners told me that they debate and argue a lot with their parents and that the parents highly value their opinions.

But the rural learners told me that most of the time they just listen to what the parents have to tell them e.g. when they are sending them on errands or giving them instructions for the chores they have to do. They said that they never argue with their parents because it is considered ‘as bad manners or not respecting the adults’ but occasionally they give them opinions and they listen “but that usually happens only when you are telling them about something you have learnt at school”.

### 9. Activities carried out in English at home and at school

**Table 4 shows the activities the learners engage in at school and at home while using English**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Activities at school</b>	<b>Activities at home</b>
<b>P3 Urban</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss class work with friends and teachers</li> <li>• Conversing with friends</li> <li>• playing</li> <li>• Everything: it is the only language used at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the time talking to parents and siblings.</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Revising notes</li> </ul>
<b>P3 Rural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardly anything</li> <li>• Only when the teachers teach English or mention English words in other lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost nothing. (I asked them whether they revise their notes and said they do a bit but only at school)</li> </ul>
<b>P6 Urban</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss class work with friends and teachers</li> <li>• Discussing topics given by the teachers</li> <li>• Debate</li> <li>• Reading books, newspapers, magazines, notices, notes, talking about what they read</li> <li>• Conversing with friends</li> <li>• Playing</li> <li>• Writing letters to friends, siblings, relatives and parents</li> <li>• Everything since it is the only language used at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the time talking to parents and siblings.</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Revising notes</li> <li>• Discuss class work with friends and parents</li> <li>• Reading books, newspapers, magazines, notices, notes, talking about what they read</li> <li>• Playing with friends</li> <li>• Writing letters to friends, siblings and relatives</li> <li>• Almost everything because they use it most of the time</li> </ul>
<b>P6 Rural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the teachers teach English or mention English words in other lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking with some visitors</li> <li>• Revising the notes</li> <li>• Sometimes speaking to</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revising the notes</li> <li>• Reading some notices</li> <li>• Debate</li> <li>• Sometimes singing</li> </ul>	parents and relatives who know it
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### **10. The people whom the learners read, speak, write and/or listen to in English at home, in the home community and in the school community**

After establishing the kinds of activities the learners get involved using English both at school and at home I wanted to find out the people these learners interact with in English with in the home and school communities besides those indicated in the table above.

I discovered that the urban learners are immersed in English almost all their lives. The urban area is cosmopolitan in nature in that it is populated by people from all over Uganda and some from outside Uganda. This makes the learners speak, and listen to almost only English. They only use different languages when in company of people who cannot speak English. Secondly the urban learners use only English at school. This ‘forces’ them to read and write practically only in English, both in the home and the school communities.

The rural learners said that within the school communities the only people they speak and listen to in English are the teachers, the head teachers and occasionally some visitors who come to school.

In the home communities they said that communicating in English is rare because most of the rural population does not speak it. They said they may happen to meet some strangers or a visitor may come home and speak to them in English but that does not happen often. They went ahead, however, to say that sometimes they may be asked to read a letter, a school report, brochure or part of a newspaper and translate it for some people seeking the information in that document.

### **11. Exposure to TV and radio programmes**

I asked the learners whether they watch TV and/or listen to radio programmes; if they did I wanted to know the specific programmes, which thrilled them. I also wanted to know whether they discuss those programmes and if so, with whom.

**Table 5 shows the TV and radio programmes the learners watch and/or listen to and the people they discuss them with**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Urban learners</b>	<b>Rural learners</b>
Do you watch TV programmes?	Yes	No
What specific programmes do you watch?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious ones</li> <li>• Academic ones</li> <li>• About politics</li> <li>• News telecasts</li> <li>• Sports</li> <li>• Films</li> </ul>	None They do not have TVs in rural areas
Do you listen to radio programmes? In what language?	Yes English mainly	Yes Mainly Luganda and Lusoga and sometimes English
What specific programmes do you listen to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Academic ones</li> <li>• About politics</li> <li>• Religious</li> <li>• Almost all as long as they have the time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News when the parents are listening too</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Death announcements</li> </ul>
Do you discuss the programmes you watch/listen to, if so with whom?	Yes Parents, teacher, friends, siblings, neighbours and visitors	Yes Parents, friends, siblings, sometimes neighbours and visitors

## 12. Literacy practices at school and at home

I asked the learners about the other things they read and write at home and school and the languages they use. Their responses are shown in the table below.

**Table 6 shows the other things learners read and write at school and at home and the languages they use**

<b>Class</b>	<b>At school</b>	<b>At home</b>
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<b>Urban learners</b>	read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story books</li> <li>• Textbooks</li> <li>• Charts and cards</li> <li>• Notes</li> <li>• Notices</li> <li>• Newspapers</li> <li>• Posters</li> <li>• Brochures</li> <li>• Revise notes</li> </ul>	Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story books</li> <li>• Textbooks</li> <li>• Charts and cards</li> <li>• Notes</li> <li>• Newspapers</li> <li>• Magazines</li> <li>• Adverts on TVs</li> <li>• Brochures</li> <li>• Parents' books</li> <li>• Revise notes</li> </ul>
	Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do home work from school</li> <li>• Class work exercises</li> <li>• Letters to other people</li> <li>• Do home work organised by parents (go with it and do it during break)</li> <li>• Articles for newspapers, notice boards and school magazines</li> </ul>	Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do home work from school</li> <li>• Do home work organised by parents</li> <li>• Letters to other people</li> <li>• Notes from TV and radio programmes</li> </ul>
<b>Rural Learners</b>	Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes revise notes</li> <li>• Sometimes read textbooks</li> <li>• Notices</li> <li>• A few read supplementary readers</li> </ul>	Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bit of revision when approaching exams</li> <li>• (Rarely) bits if newspaper which wrap items bought from shops</li> <li>• Some read reports and letters for their parents</li> </ul>
	Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercises</li> <li>• Notes</li> </ul>	Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes asked by parents to write for them letters</li> <li>• Besides hardly write anything</li> </ul>

### 13. Opportunities to develop literacy practices e.g. reading novels, plays, poems or newspapers on their own.

I asked the learners whether they get opportunities to read novels, plays, poems or newspapers on their own and if so, how often and where they get them from.

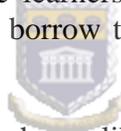
The urban learners said that they read a lot of novels, plays and poems. They said that they read newspapers almost everyday. They told me that they get them both from school and from home. Their schools also avail them with newspapers but their parents also but newspapers daily so if they do not read them at school then they can read them at home.

However, the rural learners told me that they rarely read books on their own. They said that if they read at all it could be one book in a term and they may not even complete reading it (a term is usually three months). They said that reading a newspaper is a matter of chance. They explained that somebody within the neighbourhood might bring one as they come home for a weekend or at the month end and then they can get a chance to read.

#### **14. Access to library facilities at school, home and in the community**

In a bid to know how these learners access books and other reading materials I asked them whether they had libraries in their schools, homes and in the communities where they live and if they had how often they visited those libraries.

The urban respondents told me that all their schools had libraries. Most of them said they borrow books once a week. The learners from school D said they visit their library everyday in the evening; they borrow the books and can take them back as soon as they finish reading them.



The urban learners also said they have home libraries in form of big bookshelves in their home study rooms. They said that these bookshelves had varieties of books, which they were free to read anytime.

They added that there is a public library in Iganga town they usually visit on weekends and during holidays and in addition there are two secondary schools within the town neighbourhood, which have libraries. They said that one was allowed to go and read from those libraries but one had to pay some membership fee to be allowed to borrow books from the school libraries. They said that they usually go to read from the school libraries during holidays.

The respondents from the rural schools said that their schools did not have any libraries. The books were kept in stores from where the teachers would get them and take them to class if they wanted them to read or use them during the lessons. The books would then be collected at the end of the lesson and taken back to the stores.

They said that they had neither home nor community libraries.

#### **15. Learners' views on how practising English would help them in life, school and examinations**

I wanted to find out whether the learners felt that practising English would help in school, during examination and in life after school and below are their views.

They conceded that practising English is very helpful, as it would help them a great deal. They said that while in school it would help them to:

- Speaking to teachers.
- Follow the lesson and understand what is taught in all other subjects.
- Read text and other books so that they access information to supplement the content given by the teachers.
- Interact with other pupils.
- Campaign for leadership positions.
- Talk to other people who visit the school.

In examinations they said that the practice would help them to:

- Read text and other books so that they access information.
- Read, understand and interpret the questions.
- Write the correct answers correctly.
- Get good marks and pass exams.

In life after school they said that English would help them to:

- Get good jobs and live comfortably.
- Speak with other people e.g. visitors, foreigners and they understand each other.
- Visit other countries and even be able to work there.
- Trade with other people who do not speak their languages but understand English.

### **16. Learners' views on how practising mother tongue would help them in life, school and examinations**

I sought to find out whether the learners felt that practising mother tongue would help in school, during examination and in life after school and below are their views.

They conceded that practising MT can be helpful to some extent as knowing it can help them in some situations. The learners from the rural schools said that while in school it would help them to:

- Understand what and/or when the teachers are teaching as some of them do not understand when the teachers use only English. (*grasp concepts?*)

- Interact with other pupils.
- To talk to teachers properly because they talk to them in MT.

They said that during the exams MT would not be very helpful because the papers are set in English and they have to be answered in English. They added that even if they remember what they were taught they still have to write it in English.

In life they said that MT helps them to:

- Understand what happens around them because they can ask and everything is explained to them.
- Talk to people who do not understand English like the grandparents, housemaids and any other illiterate people who might live with them.

**17. Whether the learners notice any difference between the performance of the urban and the rural schools**

All the respondents said that they know that some schools especially those in the urban areas perform much better than those in the rural areas.

**18. Learners' views as to why learners in rural and urban areas perform the way they do**



**Table 7 shows the learners' views on why schools in rural and urban areas perform the way they do**

<b>Reasons why learners in urban schools perform the way they do</b>	<b>Reasons why learners in rural schools perform the way they do</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They have a lot to read e.g. textbooks, supplementary readers, notices, notes, magazines etc.</li> <li>• They are taught in English.</li> <li>• They speak English all the time at home and at school.</li> <li>• They attend schools everyday.</li> <li>• They are punctual.</li> <li>• They stay long at school.</li> <li>• Their teachers teach seriously and help the weak ones.</li> <li>• They do a lot of exercises in class.</li> <li>• They do a lot of homework.</li> <li>• They read a lot on their own.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They have very few reading materials and they only read during class time.</li> <li>• Many of them just do not want to read. They have the 'I do not care attitude'.</li> <li>• Most of the time they are taught in Lusoga.</li> <li>• They speak Lusoga all the time at home and at school.</li> <li>• Constant absenteeism.</li> <li>• When the teachers are absent the classes are not taught.</li> <li>• The teachers also come late.</li> <li>• They come late and classes begin</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They discuss with their teachers.</li> <li>• They are disciplined.</li> <li>• They have more time to revise and study as they have househelps to do most of the domestic chores.</li> <li>• The parents are serious and they tell them to read most of the time.</li> <li>• They are not many in their classes.</li> <li>• They do a lot of tests as practice for exams.</li> <li>• They are focused on what they want to be in future.</li> <li>• They get lunch at school.</li> <li>• They are well looked after and are healthy most of the time.</li> </ul>	<p>late.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their teachers do not teach seriously and help the weak ones.</li> <li>• They do not do homework.</li> <li>• They do very few exercises in class, just a few numbers.</li> <li>• They do not discuss any of the class work with their teachers.</li> <li>• Many of them are indisciplined and they run from one school to another to avoid being caned.</li> <li>• They have little time to revise and study, as they have to do most of the domestic chores.</li> <li>• The parents are not serious and they hardly tell them to read.</li> <li>• They are very many in their classes.</li> <li>• They never do any tests as practice for exams so they get scared during exams.</li> <li>• They do not get lunch at school and have to study hungry in the afternoon.</li> <li>• Many of them are undernourished and sickly.</li> </ul>
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### 19. Reasons why the schools perform the way they do

Table 8 shows the reasons the learners gave for the rural and urban school performing the way they do

<b>Urban schools perform the way they do because</b>	<b>Reasons in urban schools perform the way they do</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They have better and serious teachers.</li> <li>• They have more books for both the teachers and the learners.</li> <li>• They have better classrooms where they can hang a lot of reading materials.</li> <li>• They have a lot of learning/teaching materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They teachers are not serious sometimes they are absent and also come late and leave early.</li> <li>• They have very few books for both the teachers and the learners.</li> <li>• The classrooms do not have shutters the teachers cannot hang a lot of reading materials.</li> </ul>

<p>materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The classes are well furnished the pupils study when seated comfortably.</li> <li>• Parents are cooperative and rich; they pay money to the school.</li> <li>• The teachers are paid more money by the school and are more comfortable.</li> <li>• The teachers are housed in/near the schools; they come early and spend a lot of time with the learners.</li> <li>• The number of learners per class is small and manageable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They do not have a lot of learning/teaching materials.</li> <li>• The classes do not have enough furniture. Some of the pupils study while standing while some sit on the floor and cannot write comfortably.</li> <li>• Parents are poor; they do not pay money to the school.</li> <li>• The teachers are not paid more money by the school and are miserable and problem-ridden.</li> <li>• The teachers are not housed in/near the schools; they come late and leave early and cannot spend a lot of time with the learners.</li> <li>• The number of learners per class is huge and unmanageable.</li> </ul>
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## 20. Learners' expectation from the education system

All the learners expressed very high hopes and expectations. Their expectations are summarised below:



- The first and most stressed expectation was to get good jobs and earn 'enough' money to enable them live decently. The examples of the jobs they cited included being lawyers, engineers, doctors, teachers etc.
- They want to become important people such as members of parliament, ministers, district and local leaders.
- To be able to behave well, understand and respect others.
- To make their parents proud so that they and the parents are respected in the communities where they were born, where they live, and where they work.
- To be able to look after their parents and give them a good life and (those from the rural areas- educate their siblings).
- To be able to serve the country effectively and efficiently.
- To be able promote their country's interests contribute to its development.

One thing I noticed was that the expectation the urban learners gave were more focused and higher than those given by the rural learners. For example while the urban learners wanted to become members of parliament, ministers, the rural learners talked of becoming district and local leaders.

**21. Recommendations to various people for maintaining/improving the standard of performance of the learners and bridging the gap between the rural and the urban schools' academic achievement**

I asked these respondents to suggest recommendations the teachers, head teachers, parents and their fellow learners, which would help all schools to perform well so that the gap between the urban and the rural learners can be bridged. The recommendations from each group of learners were for both rural and urban stakeholders.

**Table 9 shows the learners recommendations for the stakeholders**

	<b>Urban learners</b>	<b>Rural learners</b>
<b>Head teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the teachers happy.</li> <li>• Get more teachers.</li> <li>• Teach some lessons too.</li> <li>• Be more present in and manage the schools.</li> <li>• Provide even more materials.</li> <li>• Introduce sports.</li> <li>• Boarding -give better diet and medical care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the teachers happy and respect them.</li> <li>• Get more teachers.</li> <li>• Teach some lessons too.</li> <li>• Be more present in and manage the schools.</li> <li>• Provide more materials e.g. textbooks.</li> <li>• Get past test paper from good schools for practice.</li> <li>• Provide lunch for teachers and learners.</li> <li>• Sensitise parents tell them how to play their roles effectively.</li> </ul>
<b>Teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit other schools and copy the good things.</li> <li>• Organise more debates and discussions sessions.</li> <li>• Increase time for remedial sessions</li> <li>• Organise vaccination and other health services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach more effectively.</li> <li>• Guide the learners as they do class work.</li> <li>• Be punctual and stay longer in school.</li> <li>• Teach manners,</li> <li>• Cane the indiscipline.</li> <li>• Reduce absenteeism.</li> <li>• Read more; go on education tours to become more knowledgeable.</li> <li>• Visit better schools to see what makes them perform well and copy.</li> </ul>
<b>Parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide all requirements as asked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide school requirements.</li> <li>• Provide the basic needs at home.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with teachers to help children.</li> <li>• Help the school to provide more facilities e.g. to build or improvise for libraries.</li> <li>• Pay fees promptly.</li> <li>• Avoid child abuse like denying the children food.</li> <li>• Protect children from defilement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work hard to reduce poverty.</li> <li>• Go for adult study programmes.</li> <li>• Counsel the children and educate them on the value of education.</li> <li>• Liaise with teachers to help children to do well in school.</li> <li>• Help the school to provide more facilities e.g. to build classrooms.</li> <li>• Help the children as they do home work.</li> <li>• Provide money for coaching.</li> </ul>
<b>Fellow learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read even harder than ever before.</li> <li>• Be disciplined at home and at school.</li> <li>• Respect elders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study and revise their notes more seriously on their own.</li> <li>• Love and be interested in school.</li> <li>• Be disciplined at home and at school.</li> <li>• Could find work on weekends so that they can buy themselves requirements.</li> <li>• Respect elders.</li> </ul>



### **The learners' views on the impact of poverty on the community and on the primary school learners**

All the learners said that there was widespread poverty especially in the rural areas. They said that the high levels of poverty make people miserable because:

- They cannot afford the necessities of life.
- They have to work very hard and yet they get very little out of their labour.
- People live in bad conditions with barely enough to clothe or look after themselves.
- They cannot afford decent/balanced meals and end up malnourished and less productive.
- They are often sickly and yet they cannot afford proper medication.
- The parents cannot pay for their children's education.
- The teachers in rural areas are miserable and cannot do their job well because they have many problems.

But the learners had a brighter side with regard to the prevailing poverty. They said that:

- It has made the parents to get fewer children whom they can look after.
- It is forcing the rural parents to seek employment so that they can provide for their families.
- It is making some parents take children to school because they do not want their children to live miserable lives like they have.
- It is making some farmers take on modern methods of farming such as irrigating the crops instead of waiting for rain. This is increasing production.
- They said that the urban parents are investing in more productive projects like building houses and starting other good schools
- Some rich people are now thinking of starting projects for the relatives instead of giving them handouts for survival.
- Some teachers are going for upgrading courses so that the higher qualifications make them eligible for better pay.



## **APPENDIX F**

### **GUIDELINES FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

1. Evidence of literacy practices e.g. availability of books and other materials for the learners to read and materials written by learners displayed.
2. Learners' participation in literacy practices during the lessons.
3. Teacher-learner interaction during the lessons.
4. Learner -learner (L-L) interaction during the lesson and the language used.
5. Literacy artefacts such as charts, cards and/or maps in the class and around the school.



## CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

This study was carried out in ten schools which are presented as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J. Schools A, B, C, D, and E were the urban schools and the rest were the rural schools. In each school I observed six lessons, three in P 3 and three in P 6 in each school. I observed two lessons, one in P 3 and the other in P 6 on every visit in each school per fortnight. During the same period we were also carrying out the interviews with the other respondents.

These are my observations.

### **Evidence of literacy practices e.g. availability of books and other materials for the learners to read and materials written by learners displayed.**

#### **School A**

In the P 3 classroom there were two sets of different course books for English. Each set had fifty-five books each. There was one set of fifty-five books for Mathematics, one set of sixty-five books for Social Studies and one of sixty for Science. The class had fifty learners. In all the lessons each learner had a book to themselves. I was informed that some learners had personal copies. There were several sets of varying numbers of supplementary readers.

There was children's work displayed on the walls, which was mainly from handwriting, fine art, SST, science and religious studies. There were also plenty of printed charts and cards and some had been made by the teachers covering all subjects.

In P 6 there were plenty of books for all subjects. The class enrolment was forty-three and most of the sets were over sixty. I also learnt that some of the learners had personal copies. In all the lessons I observed learners had a book to themselves. I was informed that the books were so many because the school also buys more in addition to those sent by the government. There were also plenty of printed charts, newspaper cuttings and maps on the walls.

There were learners' compositions, cartoons and labelled pictures displayed on the walls. I was told that the compositions were prize-winning pieces, which are normally selected from the weekly composition exercise. The writer would get a colour card referred to as "the flying colour" and would be exempted from morning work for that week.

## **School B**

P 3 had fifty-three learners but there were plenty of books for all the subjects. In all the lessons I observed all the learners had books to themselves and I noticed that some would remain in the cupboards. There were textbooks for all subjects and several sets of supplementary readers. There were also plenty of printed charts and cards and some had been made by the teachers.

There was a lot of children's work displayed on the walls, which was mainly from SST science, handwriting and religious studies.

In P 6 there were plenty of books for all subjects. The class enrolment was forty-eight and most of the sets were over sixty. I learnt that many of the learners had personal copies. In all the lessons each learner had a book to themselves and I noticed that many books remained in the cupboard unused. In this school I was also informed that the books were so many because the school also buys more and some parents are also very keen on buying books for their children in addition to those sent by the government. There were also plenty of printed charts, newspaper articles and maps on the walls.

In this class there was a bulletin board. It had pieces of 'news' written by the learners. I was told that anybody was free to write whatever they thought was interesting for the class members to read.



## **School C**

School C is a private school set up by a qualified teacher who is the headmistress. The school buys the books but also encourages the parents who can afford to buy for their children and some do. P 3 had thirty learners. There were sets of about twenty-five course books for all subjects. In all the lessons all learners had textbooks to themselves. There was one set of supplementary readers currently in class and later I saw some more sets in the store. On inquiry I was told that each class P 1 to P 3 is allowed one set of readers in the class but then they can pick another set as soon as the teacher feels it necessary. P 4 to P 7 teachers are allowed two sets at a time but then they can pick another set as soon as the teacher feels it necessary. These teachers said that the store is very accessible to them.

There were pieces of children's work displayed on the walls, which was from handwriting and Social Studies and Science. There were also plenty of printed and teacher drawn charts and cards in the class.

P 6 had thirty learners only. The textbooks for each subject were about twenty-five. Each learner had a textbook during all the lessons we observed. There were plenty of printed charts and maps on the walls. I learnt that the parents of the children in P 6 and P 7 are quite keen on buying textbooks for their children.

There were learners' compositions, cartoons and labelled pictures displayed on the walls. There were also summary chart written by the learners about topic covered in Science and Social Studies (SST) on the walls.

### **School D**

In this school I found that there were plenty of books for all subjects. I learnt that while some were supplied by the govt, the school bought some and the parents like buying many books for their children. P 3 had sixty-six learners. No books were shared during the lessons I observed and many remained unused. There were several sets of class readers. In addition, this school had a big well stocked library and I was informed that each class, P 3 to P 7, was allocated a day to be reading in the library after classes the evening. Plenty of printed charts and cards and some had been made by the teachers were in the class. I learnt that the school, parents and well-wishers had stocked the library over a period of about ten years.

In this school I saw a lot of children's work from all subjects displayed on the walls. All of it was in English.

P 6 had two streams of fifty-one and fifty-two learners each. I observed two lessons in each stream. There were plenty of books for all subjects. I learnt that they were supplied by the govt, the school and like for P 3 the parents liked buying many books for their children. Each learner had a textbook during all the lessons we observed. There were plenty of printed charts and maps on the walls. The school buys most of the charts.

In this school I saw a lot of children's work from all subjects displayed on the walls. In P 6 this included compositions, cartoons, worked out mathematical equations, maps and Science charts. All these were in English.

### **School E**

P 3 in school E had forty learners but there were plenty of books for all the subjects. In all the lessons all the learners had books to themselves and I noticed that some remained in the cupboards during the lessons I observed. There were several sets of supplementary readers. There were also plenty of printed charts and cards and some had been made by the teachers.

There was plenty of children's work from all subjects displayed on the walls in the classroom.

In P 6 there were also plenty of books for all subjects. The class enrolment was sixty-one in the streams I observed. I could see that many of the learners had personal

copies. In all the lessons each learner had a book to themselves and I noticed that many books remained in the cupboard. In this school too I was informed that the books were so many because the school also buys more and some parents are ready to and buy books for their children in addition to those sent by the government. There were also plenty of printed charts, newspaper articles and maps on the walls.

In this class there were learners' compositions, cartoons diagrams from SST and science and worked out mathematical equations displayed on the walls.

### **School F**

P 3 in school F had ninety-one, eighty-three and eighty-seven learners respectively in the three lessons I observed. All of them were in one class. The register had one hundred and seven recorded. There were textbooks for all subjects but they were not many. There were all between 22 and 25 per set. The books were supplied by the govt. No child had a personal copy and the school had not bought any. During our observation the books were shared one between three to four learners. In one Maths lesson the teacher wrote the sums on the blackboard because the headmaster's office was closed. He had left the school without the teacher's notice. I was informed that that happened quite often. There were some supplementary readers also but they were kept in the headmaster's office like all the textbooks. They would be fetched when required. There was no storing facility in the class. The classroom had neither door nor window shutters.



There were no literacy artefacts in the classroom. There was nothing displayed in the classroom.

P 6 had ninety-seven learners recorded in the register. The attendance was 87, 76 and 91 respectively for the lessons I observed. The textbooks were 25 for SST, Maths and Science and 28 for English. The books were fetched from the headmaster's office to be used during the lessons and had to be returned at the end of each lesson. They were supplied by the govt. Neither the school nor the parents had bought any textbook.

Like in P 3 there were no literacy artefacts or any form of children's work displayed in the P 6 classroom.

### **School G**

P 3 in school G had one hundred and twenty one learners recorded the register. Eighty three, ninety seven and ninety six learners respectively attended the three lessons I observed. There were textbooks for all subjects but they were not many. There were 34 per set for the learners and one for the teacher. The books were supplied by the govt. No child had a personal copy and the school had not bought any. During our observation the books were shared between three or four learners.

There were some supplementary readers, which showed no sign of usage at all. Like all the textbooks they were kept in the bookstore and the key was kept in the headmaster's office. The textbooks would be fetched when required. There was no storing facility in the class.

The classroom had a door and shutters but there were no artefacts. There was nothing displayed in the classroom.

P 6 had eighty-seven learners recorded in the register. The attendance was 67, 71 and 77 respectively for the lessons I observed. The textbooks were 33 for each subject. The school had received 35 copies of each textbook from the govt. The books were kept in the bookstore and the key was to be picked from the headmaster's office before the books would be fetched to be used during the lessons. They were supplied by the govt. Neither the school nor the parents had bought any.

The classroom had a door and shutters. There were three Science charts and a map of Africa on the wall but there was not any learners' work displayed in the classroom. The teacher told me that he removes the charts everyday before going home and puts them back the next day or when he remembers.

### **School H**



P 3 in school H one hundred eleven learners recorded the register. Ninety-three, ninety seven and ninety six learners respectively attended the three lessons I observed. There were textbooks for all subjects but they were not many as compared to the numbers of the learners. There were all 34 per set for the learners and one for the teacher. The books were supplied by the govt. No child had a personal copy and the school had not bought any. During my observation the books were shared between three or four learners. There were some supplementary readers, which showed no sign of usage. They were kept in the bookstore like all the textbooks and the key was kept in the headmaster's office. The textbooks would be fetched when required. There was no storing facility in the class. The classroom had neither door nor window shutters.

There were no artefacts in the classroom. There was not any learners' work displayed in the classroom.

P 6 had ninety-five learners recorded in the register. The attendance was 89, 91 and 87 respectively for the lessons I observed. The textbooks were 33 for each subject. The school had received 35 copies of each textbook from the govt. There were several sets of supplementary readers but they were also few in numbers per set. They were kept in the bookstore and the key was to be picked from the headmaster's office before the books would be fetched to be used during the lessons. Neither the school nor the parents had bought any textbooks. However, most of the supplementary readers in this school did not show that they are used regularly.

In this school P 6 and P 7 classrooms had doors and shutters. But there was only a map of Africa displayed on the P 6 classroom wall but there was not any learners' displayed in the classroom. There was nothing displayed on the walls of the P 7 classroom.

### **School I**

P 3 in school one hundred thirty three learners recorded the register. One hundred twenty seven, one hundred two and ninety-six learners respectively attended the three lessons I observed. There were textbooks for all subjects but they were few compared to the numbers of the learners. There were all 30 per set for the learners and one for the teacher. The books were supplied by the govt. No child had a personal copy and the school had not bought any. During my observation the books were shared between four to five learners. There were some supplementary readers, which did not show much sign of usage. They were kept in the headmaster's office like all the textbooks. The textbooks would be fetched when required. The classroom had neither door nor window shutters.



There were no artefacts in the classroom. There was not any learners' work displayed in the classroom.

P 6 had one hundred seven learners recorded in the register. The attendance was 93, 91 and 88 respectively for the lessons I observed. The textbooks were 33 for each subject. The school had received 30 copies of each textbook from the govt. There were several sets of supplementary readers but they were also few in numbers per set. They were kept in the bookstore and the key was to be picked from the headmaster's office before the books would be fetched to be used during the lessons. Neither the school nor the parents had bought any textbooks. However, the books in this school showed almost very little sign of usage.

In this school P 6 classroom had a door but had no window shutters. There was nothing displayed in the classroom.

### **School J**

P 3 in school J had one hundred and twenty two learners recorded the register. 104, 92, and 86 learners respectively attended the three lessons I observed. There were textbooks for all subjects. There were all 39 per set for the learners and one for the teacher. The books were supplied by the govt. No child had a personal copy and the school had not bought any. During my observation the books were shared between three to four learners. There were some supplementary readers. They were kept in the

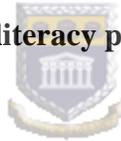
bookstore and the key was to be picked from in the headmaster's office like all the textbooks but the supplementary books showed no sign of usage. The textbooks would be fetched when required. The classroom had neither door nor window shutters.

There were no literacy artefacts in the classroom. There was not any learners' work displayed in the classroom.

P 6 had one hundred twenty learners recorded in the register. The attendance was 83, 91 and 87 respectively for the lessons we observed. The textbooks were 39 for each subject. The school had received 40 copies of each set of textbooks from the govt. There were several sets of supplementary readers but they were also few in numbers per set. They were kept in the bookstore and the key was to be picked from the headmaster's office before the books would be fetched to be used during the lessons. Neither the school nor the parents had bought any textbooks. However, most of the books in this school showed almost no sign of usage.

In this school, the P 6 classroom had neither a door nor window shutters. There was nothing displayed in the classroom.

## **Learners' participation in literacy practices during the lessons**



### **School A**

In P 3 in school A the learners participated in various literacy practices. During the English lesson I observed that they all had textbooks. They read from them silently and aloud whenever the teacher called upon them to. As they read aloud I noticed that they were quite fluent. In the other lessons, which were Science and Mathematics, they had the books and read from them.

They answered the teachers' questions correctly and could get the answers from what they were reading. A few asked some questions seeking clarification on what was being taught. Throughout these lessons there was a lot of participation in what was going on. This was evident through attentive listening, the raising of hands as the questions were asked and answering them.

The first five minutes of the English lesson was telling the news. Almost all learners wanted to tell the news. From what was told, I could tell that the two learners had picked the items from the TV news telecast and they had talked about the stories with their parents.

These learners had exercise books and the pencils and did the exercises the teachers gave them. A quick look at the books showed me that these pupils do a lot exercises in class and as homework.

In P 6 the situation was similar to that of P 3. The learners had the books and used them a great deal during the lessons I observed. The P 6 learners were very fluent in both speech and reading.

They asked a lot of questions and answered all the teachers' questions. The Science lesson had group discussions. The learners discussed freely with each other and later presented their findings confidently.

These learners had two sets of exercise books. I learnt that one set was for homework while the other was for class work. Both sets showed that a lot of exercises are done by these learners and marked by the teachers.

### **School B**

School B was very similar to school A. The P 3 learners participated in various literacy practices. During the English lesson I observed that they all had textbooks. They read from them silently and aloud whenever the teacher called on them to. As they read aloud I noticed that they were also fluent. In the Social Studies and Mathematics lessons that I observed the learners had the books and read them.

These learners participated actively in the lessons by answering all the questions the teachers asked. Throughout these lessons there was a lot of participation in what was going on. This was evident through attentive listening and the answering of the questions, which the teachers asked. They used English to ask and answer the teachers' questions.

They had the exercise books and pencils and did their exercises quickly and quietly. They consulted each other and the teacher when they were in doubt. Their books showed plenty of exercises, which had been done correctly. All the work in the exercise books was marked and corrections had been done.

In P 6 the situation in this school was similar to that of P 3. The learners had the books and used them a great deal during the lessons I observed. The P 6 learners were very fluent in English both in speech and reading.

They asked a lot of questions and answered all the teachers' questions. They wrote the notes during the lesson and consulted their textbooks as they did the exercises. The learners discussed freely with each other and with the teachers.

These learners also had two sets of exercise books. One set was for homework while the other was for class work. Both sets of books showed that these learners do a lot of exercises. Later I learnt from the teacher that as a rule these learners had to have homework in at least two subjects every day and the teachers knew the subjects meant to give homework each day.

This was a boarding school and I learnt that the teachers teach at night for some time during prep before the pupils are given time to do their homework.

### **School C**

P 3 in school C was also equally active in reading. I observed an English reading lesson. Each had a book and read silently. When asked questions they answered them correctly in full, well constructed sentences. They were able to act out part of the story using partly their own words. They were very attentive as the teachers taught. They did not ask many questions but their exercises showed that they understood the story and knew what to do. They had the exercise books and pencils and wrote exercises very quickly and quietly but very well.

In the Science and Social Studies (SST) lessons they were also very active. They did the work as the teacher wanted it done. The books I looked at showed enormous amount of work. In Science they discussed the pictures the teacher gave them in small groups and later answered her questions correctly.

P 6 in school C was also very active in all the lessons I observed. They had the textbooks and used them well. They also discussed their work in groups and reported their findings to the whole class well. They did the exercises very fast and those who finished earlier reverted to reading their textbooks while awaiting further instructions. Their books showed plenty of previous exercises and notes. They interacted freely with each other and with the teachers.

### **School D**

School D was not very different from the other urban schools. The P 3 learners participated actively in literacy practices in all the lessons I observed. During the English lesson I observed that they all had textbooks. They read from them silently. When they read aloud I noticed that they were also fluent. In the SST and Science lessons I observed the learners had the books and read from them.

These learners answered all the questions the teachers asked. Throughout these lessons there was a lot of participation in what was going on. They listened attentively and almost all of them would raise their hands as the questions were asked and those picked answered them correctly.

They had the exercise books and pencils and did their exercises quickly and quietly. In this class most of the learners did their exercises individually. Their books showed plenty of previous exercises, which had been done correctly.

In P 6 the situation was just like in P 3. The learners had the books and used them a great deal during the lessons. These learners were very fluent both in speech and reading. They showed keen interest in their work.

They asked a lot of questions and answered all the teachers' questions. They wrote the notes during the lesson and consulted their textbooks. The learners discussed freely with each other and with the teachers.

These learners also had two sets of exercise books. Like in the other schools one set was for homework while the other was for class work. Both sets showed that these learners do a lot of exercises.

This was a boarding school too and I learnt that the teachers, like those of school B, teach at night during prep before the pupils are given time to do their homework.

### **School E**

In P 3 in school E the learners took part in various literacy practices. During the English lesson I observed that they all had textbooks. They read from them silently. As they read I noticed that they were quite fluent. In the other lessons, SST and Mathematics, they had the books and used them well.

They answered the teachers' questions correctly and could get the answers from what they were reading. None of them asked some questions seeking clarification on what was being taught. Throughout these lessons there was a lot of participation in what was going on. The learners were very interested in what they were being taught. This could be deduced from the attentive listening, the way the questions asked were answered and how the learners did their exercises quietly and individually.

The first five minutes of the English lesson was telling the news. Almost all learners wanted to tell the news. From the way the news were told, I noticed that these learners were confident.

These learners had exercise books and the pencils and did the exercises the teachers gave them. A look at some of the books showed me that these pupils do a lot exercises in class and as homework.

In P 6 the situation was like that in the other urban schools. The learners had the books and used them a great deal during the lessons. The P 6 learners were very fluent both in speech and reading.

They asked a lot of questions and answered all the teachers' questions. The Science lesson had group discussions. The learners discussed freely with each other and later presented their findings confidently.

These learners also had two sets of exercise books. Like in the other schools one set was for homework while the other was for class work. Both sets showed that lot of exercises are done by these learners and attended to by the teachers.

### **School F**

In School F the P 3 learners participated in the literacy activities but not as freely as those in the urban schools. They read but I noticed that they were sharing the books. Three pupils read from one book. Some were slower than the others they were sharing with. The fast ones had to wait for the slower ones.

They did not ask questions but answered those they were asked by the teachers. In the English lesson I watched I could see that they could not easily get the answers from the book. The teacher had to give the lead. She prompted them to translate the story to Lusoga. Most of the answers they gave in English were either one word or a short phrase but when asked to answer in Lusoga they gave full sentences.

Most of them had exercise books and a few did not have pencils. Some borrowed from their friends other waited for the friends to finish before they could write. Many of the books I looked at had previous exercises but the numbers were not as many as in the case of the urban learners.

In P 6 the learners had a book between two. They read but the seemed slow. They answered the teachers' questions. They tried answering in English and I noticed that they were not very fluent. They had problems in rephrasing the information in the books to answer the questions. Only a few would 'risk' putting up their hands.

They took long writing the few numbers given them as exercise. The teacher demanded that they work individually and silently. Here four had no pens and they had to wait for their friends to finish and lend them.

### **School G**

In School G a handful of the P 3 learners participated in some literacy activities especially those at the front of the class. They read but I noticed that they were sharing the books. Three or four pupils read from one book. Some were slower than the others they were sharing with. The class was so big, close to one hundred learners per lesson. I noticed that some especially those at the back were absent-minded and a few were just chatting with those who were close to them. Some learners sat on the floor at the front of the class while a few stood at the back. The room was visibly too small for the number of the learners.

They did not ask questions but a few tried to answer those asked by the teachers. Some of the answers they gave were not correct. In the English lesson I watched I

could see that they could not easily get the answers from the book even where the answers were quite obvious.

Most of them had exercise books but a few did not and some lacked pencils. Some of those without pencils borrowed from their friends, other waited for the friends to finish before they could write a few never bothered. Those without books just looked on. The few books I looked at had previous exercises but the numbers were not as many as in the case of the urban learners. Some of the exercises were not marked. These books were not as well organised and tidy as those I had seen in the urban schools.

In P 6 the learners shared the textbooks. They read but the seemed slow. They answered the teachers' questions. When they tried answering in English and I noticed that they were not as fluent as the urban learners but they tried. They had problems with the vocabulary and in rephrasing the information in the books to answer the questions. They took much longer while trying to construct their responses. A good number of those who put up their hands to answer the questions but some gave wrong answers.

They had the exercise books and pens though they were not very fast while writing the few numbers given them in the exercises. They were told to work individually. The teacher kept on telling them to work silently.

### **School H**



In School H the P 3 learners hardly participated in the literacy activities. Other than reading but I noticed that they were sharing the books. Three or four pupils read from one book. Some were slower than the others they were sharing with and a few seemed unbothered.

They did not ask questions but a few answered those they were asked by the teachers. In the English lesson I observed the teacher translate the new words and the questions into Lusoga. Most of the answers were first given in Lusoga and then translated to English.

Most had exercise books but a number had neither books nor pencils. A few who had books borrowed pencils from their friends other waited for the friends to finish before they could write. Some just made noise at the back of the class. The few books I looked at had previous exercises but the numbers were not so many and some of the exercises were unmarked others were marked in pencil seemingly by fellow learners.

In P 6 the learners had a book between three-four learners. During the English comprehension lesson they were asked to read a few sentences each but they were slow and many stammered. They endeavoured to answer the teachers' questions but did not ask any. They answered in English and I noticed that they were not very

fluent and I could see they were struggling to construct the sentences even with the teacher's prompting.

They took long writing the few numbers given them as exercise and here four had no pens and they had to wait for their friends to finish and lend them. A few had no books. They did their work quietly and individually. A few books I looked at had a good number of previous exercises but the performance was not all that good but there were no corrections done for the failed numbers. Two learners were using one book for two or more subjects.

### **School I**

In School I the P 3 learners were engaged in some literacy activities. They read a bit. They shared the books one between four-five pupils. The class was very big. The teacher could hardly move even at the front of the class. I watched the lessons from out of the class but even then I noticed that some learners especially those at the back were absent-minded. None of the learners asked questions but a few answered those asked by the teachers. Some of the answers they gave were not correct. The teachers tried to keep the classes busy by giving exercises but a good number had neither books nor pencils while some had one of the two. Some of those without pencils borrowed from their friends and other waited for the friends to finish before they could write while others just chatted away. The teacher struggled to make the class quiet but with little success. Those without books just looked on. The few books I looked at had previous exercises but the numbers done for each exercise were few. Many of the exercises were not marked.

This school was not very different from the other rural schools. In P 6 the learners had a textbook between two to three. They read but the seemed slow. They answered the teachers' questions. They tried answering in English and I noticed that they were not fluent. A few put up their hands answer the questions but a good number were absentminded.

Most had the exercise books and pens though they were not very fast while writing the few numbers given them in the exercises. Some had only books while other had only pens. Those who had no pens and they had to wait for their friends to finish and lend them. A few books I looked at had a good number of previous exercises but the performance was not very good. They did the work silently and individually.

### **School J**

In School J the P 3 learners also participated in some literacy activities. They read from shared the books. Three-four pupils read from one book. While they read, a few were slower than the others they were sharing with a few seemed unbothered. They did not ask questions but a few answered those they were asked by the teachers. In the lessons I observed in this school (Science, SST and Maths) the learners were kept

busy mainly by doing exercises. Discipline was a big problem in this class also in all the lessons I watched.

Most had exercise books but a few had neither books nor pencils. A few who had books borrowed pencils from their friends other waited for the friends to finish before they could write. Those without books did nothing.

The few books I looked at had previous exercises but the numbers were quite few and some of them were unmarked. The books were rather untidy.

In P 6 the learners had a book between two or three learners. They were made to read a few sentences each but they were also slow and stammered a great deal and pronunciation was quite poor. They answered the teachers' questions after they were rephrased several times but did not ask any. They answered in English and I noticed that they were not very fluent. The answers were either one word or short phrases.

They took long writing the few numbers given them as exercise and here too quite number had no pens and they had to wait for their friends to finish and lend them. The teacher spent a lot of the time keeping order in the class.

A few books I looked at had a number of previous exercises but the performance was not very good. Some had attempted doing corrections but they had not been marked.

In conclusion there is a wide disparity between the ways the rural and urban learners participated in literacy practices. The rural learners did very little while the urban learners did a lot. The urban learners showed a lot of interest but many of the rural learners lacked seriousness. In addition, while the urban learners had the textbooks, exercise books and pens and pencils this was not the case for the rural learners. The textbooks were always shared and a good number lacked either the exercise books or the pens/pencils and many lacked both.

### **Teacher-learner interaction during the lessons**

#### **School A**

In P 3 in this school the teacher-learner interaction (T-L) was very good. They interacted freely and the environment was relaxed. The learners listened to the instruction, followed them and asked for clarification when they needed it.

In P 6 the T-L was excellent. They interacted freely and they shared jokes during the lessons. The atmosphere was always relaxed and amicable. They asked and answered questions. The teachers encouraged the learners to seek clarification and give their opinions and they did.

#### **School B**

The T-L in P 3 in school B was very similar to that in school A. They interacted freely in a relaxed environment. The teacher made a lot of effort to encourage the learners to speak in class especially when questions were asked.

In P 6 the T-L was also very good and relaxed and cordial. The teachers encouraged the learners to ask questions and they asked a lot of and answered all the teachers' questions. The teachers called for opinions, additional information and examples, which were also discussed freely. Jokes were also shared.

### **School C**

T-L in school C was also good. In P 3 the teacher got on well with the learners. They enjoyed consulting the teacher whenever it was necessary. A lot of healthy interaction went on while preparing the role-play and in the other lessons.

In P 6 there was a lot of fruitful T-L interaction especially during the group discussions. There was a lot of teacher and learner talk. The classroom environment was always relaxed and the teachers encouraged full pupil participation. The teachers asked questions and the learners answered all and when the learners asked questions the teachers answered them freely.

### **School D**



In P 3 in this school the T-L was very good like in the other urban schools. They interacted freely and the environment was relaxed and friendly. The learners listened to the instruction, followed them and asked for clarification when they needed it. The teachers moved around the class as the learners wrote exercises assisting them.

In P 6 the T-L was excellent. They interacted freely and they shared jokes during the lessons. The atmosphere was always relaxed. They asked and answered questions. The teachers encouraged the learners to seek clarification and give their opinions and they did. All these were discussed freely.

### **School E**

The T-L in P 3 in school E was very similar to that in the other urban schools. They interacted freely in a relaxed environment. The teacher made a lot of effort to encourage the learners to speak in class especially when questions were asked and as they told the news.

In P 6 the T-L was also very good and relaxed. The teachers encouraged the learners to ask questions and they asked a lot of and answered all the teachers' questions. The teachers called for opinions, additional information and examples, which were also discussed freely. Jokes were also shared. There were very healthy interactions also during the group discussions.

### **School F**

In P 3 of school F there was plenty of teachers talk but not much of learners talk. The learners talked only when answering questions but even this needed prompting. When working on their exercises silence was called for whenever noise was heard.

Even in P 6 there was not much learner talk. They did a lot of listening. The teachers did most of the talking. The learners spoke only when answering the teachers' questions. Sometimes they responded in chorus answers.

In all the lessons I observed in this school I could feel that the classroom atmosphere was not very relaxed from the way the teachers called for silence whenever some noise was heard without trying to find out why the noise was coming up.

### **School G**

In P 3 of school G there was plenty of teachers talk and not much of learners talk. The learners talked only when answering questions. The number of pupils was high. When working on their exercises silence was called for whenever noise was heard and this was quite often. The teachers did not try to encourage the learners to speak in class. The teachers kept canes in the class. They were not used in my presence but could have been tools for maintaining discipline.

In P 6 there was not much learner talk. They did a lot of listening and a few tried to answer the teachers' questions. The teachers did most of the talking. Some of the responses were chorus answers and there was not any discussion.

### **School H**

There was not much interaction between the teachers and the learners in P 3 in school H. The teachers would 'teach' talk as the learners listened. The teachers would ask a few questions as the lessons progressed. A few learners would put up their hands to answer. When many knew the answer, it was given in a chorus. The learners never asked any questions.

What went on in P 6 was almost the same as what transpired in P 3. The exercises were supposed to be done in silence and the teachers did not seem to welcome any noise as silence was always called for whenever a din of noise was noticed.

### **School I**

What went on in school I was very similar to what went on in the other rural schools. In P 3 there was plenty of teachers talk not much of learners talk. The learners talked

only when answering questions. The number of pupils was high. In most case the teachers called upon the class to repeat after them or after the learner who gave a correct answer. When working on their exercises silence was called for whenever noise was heard and this was quite often. The teachers did not try to encourage the learners to speak in class or to ask any questions.

What went on in P 6 was almost the same as what transpired in P 3. The exercises were done in silence and the teachers did not welcome any noise as silence was always called for whenever a din of noise was noticed. The teachers did not try to encourage the learners to speak in class or to ask any questions. They did not move around to help the learners either.

### **School J**

In school J the situation was just like that in the other rural schools In P 3 and P 6 there was plenty of teachers talk not much of learners talk. The learners talked only when answering questions. The numbers of pupils were high. In most case the teachers called upon the class to repeat after them or after the learner who gave a correct answer. When working on their exercises silence was called for whenever noise was heard and this was quite often. The teachers did not try to encourage the learners to speak in class or to ask any questions. The atmosphere always seemed tense and almost hostile in the class.



### **Learner -learner (L-L) interaction during the lesson and the language used**

#### **School A**

The L-L interaction in P 3 during lessons in school A was not much. They occasionally consulted each other discretely and stealthily as they did the exercises. Two asked questions about the news and the one who was telling the news answered the questions. They used English.

In P 6 the L-L was high as they had discussions. They listened to each other, considered and discussed what was said. They also consulted each other as they did the exercises. They used English.

#### **School B**

The L-L interaction during lessons in P 3 in school B was modest. They occasionally consulted each other as they did the exercises but each was engrossed in their own work. They used English.

In P 6 the L-L was substantial. They also consulted each other as they did the exercises. They used English.

### **School C**

In P 3 of school C the L-L interaction during lessons was quite high especially in the lesson where they did a role-play of the story they had read. They used English. They did not consult each other much as they did the exercises. They did their work individually.

In P 6 the L-L was substantial especially during the discussion. They also consulted each other as they did the exercises. They used English.

### **School D**

In school D the L-L interaction in P 3 during lessons was modest like in the other urban schools. They quietly consulted each other as they did the exercises but most of them did their work individually. They used English.

In P 6 the L-L was also not much but they also consulted each other quietly as they did the exercises. They used English.

### **School E**

The L-L interaction in P 3 during lessons in school E was quite high especially after the news. They occasionally consulted each other as they did the exercises but each was engrossed in their own work. They used English.

In P 6 the L-L was substantial during the group discussions. They also consulted each other as they did the exercises. They used English.

### **School F**

In P 3 in school F there was hardly any interaction between learners during the lessons partly because the teachers would not allow it. Those who talked did so stealthily and used L1.

In P 6 there was not much L-L interaction because it was taken to be indiscipline but there was some especially among those who lacked one item or the other and those close to them. A few seemed to be discussing non-academic issues. Those who talked used the first language mixed with some few English words.

### **School G**

In P 3 in school G there was not much L-L interaction between learners who were attentive to the teachers during the lessons. Those who had no pencils and/or books chatted quietly in low tones. They used L1.

In P 6 there was not much L-L interaction but there was some especially among those who lacked books, pens or both and those close to them. A few seemed to be disinterested in what was going on in the class. Where there was any L-L interaction it was in L1 with a few isolated English words.

In **Schools H, I and J** the situation was the same as in F and G. In P 3 there was hardly any interaction between learners during the lessons. Where it occurred, it was done very stealthily and almost in whispers. Those the teachers happened to see were reprimanded.

Even in P 6 there was not much L-L interaction. The teachers gave me the impression that they did not expect the learners to interact. When I asked them about it later I was informed that to them it was taken to be an act of indiscipline. I got this impression because on several occasions those caught were sent out of the class, rebuked or given a variety of punishments such as standing at the back of the class or kneeling in front of the class. But there was some discrete interaction especially among those who lacked one item or another and those close to them. Basically L<sub>1</sub> was used mixed with some English.

#### **Literacy artefacts such as charts, cards and/or maps in the class and around the school**

In the P 3 classrooms in schools **A, B, C, D and E** there were plenty of pictures, chart, cards and labelled objects. Some of these were hand-made while others were printed or already made. I was informed that the teachers prepared the hand-made items. I was told that a few of the already made were supplied by the govt but the schools had bought a lot more they thought were useful. There were also sentences with gaps left out to be filled in by the learners as they practiced with these incidental reading materials during their own free time.

The P 6 classrooms in schools **A, B, C, D and E** were similar to those of P 3. There were plenty of pictures, chart, wall maps both hand drawn and printed. I was informed that some of the hands drawn were prepared by the teachers and others by the learners either individually or in groups. I was told that only a few of the already made had been supplied by the govt and the rest were bought by the schools. There were also newspaper and magazines articles cut out and pasted on the class notice boards. There were also cartoons drawn by the learners on the boards inside the classroom.

Around the school compounds I saw labelled diagrams of the alimentary canal, respiratory system, blood circulation and parts of the human being such as the brain, the heart, the eye, the ear etc. These were drawn on the walls. I also saw maps, which were moulded on the ground using mortar. These were maps of several geographical

features such as the rivers, lakes, and mountains of Uganda, East Africa and Africa. I learnt that they had been constructed by learners under the teachers' guidance.

However, this was not the case in schools **F, G, H, I, and J**. In these schools there was very little, if any, such artefacts in the classrooms. In **F** I saw one chart being used in **P 3** during a lesson but the teacher could not leave it in the room since the classroom had neither door nor shutters. Even in **P 6** the teacher showed the chart briefly as he was teaching and took it away for the same reasons.

In these schools much as there were not any charts or other artefacts in the classrooms though there were some few of them in the head teachers' office. I asked the head teachers why they were not used in the classes and some of them said that teachers never ask for them much as they knew they were there. When I talked to the teacher in some of these schools some told me they were not aware that there were any charts for their class in the head teachers' offices. In school **H** there were a number of diagrams on the exterior walls of the classrooms but not inside. There were three charts in **P 7** only. A few on the walls were some of those that had been supplied by govt. I learnt that these schools do not buy any and the teachers do not prepare any because the schools do not have the money to buy the manila papers and the markers to be used.



## **APPENDIX G**

### **GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVATION IN HOME VISITS**

1. Evidence of literacy practices- artefacts seen in the homes and the physical environment in the home.
2. How the parents initiate and carry on the acculturation of the literacy process.
3. The kind of interaction that goes on between the parents and the children (P-C) and the home's physical environment.
4. The parents' general attitudes, values and ideologies about the children's education.



## OBSERVATION FROM HOME VISITS

I visited a total of six homes. Three of these were in rural while the other three were urban setting. The parents of the home I visited were part of the parents' focus groups with whom I had discussions at school. They volunteered to be visited at the end of the discussions. I spent more than eight hours in each home. During these visits I observed what went on in the course of the day, talked to the children, the parents and the other people who were in the homes. Homes 1, 2, and 3 were the urban homes while 4, 5 and 6 were the rural homes.

### **Evidence of literacy practices- artefacts seen in the homes and the physical environment in the home**

#### **Home 1**

This home is situated in the main town in the Iganga district. Both parents have good jobs. They have three children aged 12, 9 and 6 who are in P 6, P 3 and P 1 respectively. These children go to good schools (A and D in this study). The father was in the parents' focus group and he volunteered to be visited. I arrived at this home at 8:30 am and left at 7:20 pm.

Home 1 had a rich variety of literacy practice artefacts. There were calendars in the sitting and dining rooms and in the kitchen. There were charts for nursery school and P 1 in the sitting room. One had numbers 1-100, one had the plain alphabet, one had the alphabet but with sets of words accompanying each letter and one had pictures of some of the household items with their names. I later learnt that these were there for the P 1 girl. There were also photographs with captions in the sitting room.

There was big bookshelf with a wide range of books. Many of them were children books. These included many of the textbooks used from P 1 to P 6. The P 6 boy told me that all the books he used in each class were bought by the parents and kept when he went to the next class. All these books were in English except two Bibles and two Hymnbooks. These were in Luganda. There were stacks of English newspapers and *Time* magazines on top of the bookshelf.

In the boys' bedroom there was a table and two chairs. The boys told me they use them when they are studying. I saw several storybooks, a variety of charts for both SST and Science, copies of *Young Talk*, *Straight Talk* and the *Children's Vision*. The P 3 boy told me a story he had read from one of the books and he read for me a part from the English Bible. He was fluent in English. I saw the boys' exercise books, which they used at school. All of them were neat and orderly with very good work.

In the girl's room there were picture she had drawn pasted on the wall. There were also some simple storybooks from the 'Lady Bird' series. Later on the girl read for me one of these books and she seemed to know the story very well.

There was a TV and a radio in the sitting room. I was told that the children are free to watch and to listen to any program when the parents are not using these gadgets.

It is a decent home and the environment is good. It is a permanent house with running water and electricity. There is sufficient comfortable furniture and it is conducive for home study. The children have all the amenities that make life comfortable.

## **Home 2**

This was an urban home. It belongs to a single mother. She is a secondary school teacher of English Language and literature. She lost her husband some years back. She also had three children aged 15, 12 and 8 in senior four (S 4), P 7 and P 3. I arrived at this home at just before 10 am and spent the night because the parent insisted that I stay.

There were plenty of printed charts and the children's work on the walls in the sitting room, dining room and bedrooms. There were two bookshelves in the sitting room. One had the mother's books and the other had the children's books. The books in the children's bookshelf were relevant to the children's classes though there were more for the primary section. There was a wide variety of readers. There was a stack of newspapers and several copies of the *Parents* other magazine.

There was a set of indoor games, which included chess, scrabble and snakes and ladders. I played scrabble with the P 7 boy and P 3 girl and I concluded that they had a good command of English. There was a TV and radio in the sitting room. I was told that the children are free to watch the programs of their choice at the times the mother set for them.

This home also is a decent home and the environment is good. It is a spacious permanent house with running water and electricity. There is sufficient comfortable furniture and it is conducive for home study. It is in a secondary school teacher's quarters. It is quite comfortable.

## **Home 3**

This home is also situated in the main town in the Iganga district. Both parents have good jobs. They have six children aged 15, 12, 9, 7, 4 and 2 who are in S 2, P 6, P 3, P 2, nursery/ pre-school respectively and a toddler. All the school-going children go to good schools (A and B in this study). The father was part of the parents' focus group and he volunteered to be visited. I arrived at this home at 9:30 am and left at 10:00 pm.

This home also had a rich collection of literacy artefacts. There were plenty of printed educational charts and mottos on the walls in the sitting room, dining room and bedrooms. There was a big bookshelf in the sitting room. It had plenty of books both for the parents and textbooks for the children. There was a pile of newspapers on top of this bookshelf.

There was a smaller bookshelf with more of the children's books in the bedroom used by the older children, which were relevant to the children's classes. There were also some storybooks on the children's bookshelf. In another bedroom there was some of the P 3 and P 2 children's work and a few charts pasted on the walls. These was the girls' bedroom.

There was a TV and radio in the sitting room. I was told that the children are free to watch and to listen to any program when the parents are not using these them. There was also a smaller radio in the boys' room. The boys were the ones in S 2 and P 6. The S 2 boy told me he enjoys listening to BBC programs.

This home also is a wealthy home and the environment is good. It is a permanent house within a fence and they have running water and electricity. There is sufficient comfortable furniture and it is conducive for home study. The children seem to have everything a child could wish for.

#### **Home 4**



This was a rural home with uneducated and jobless parents. This home is about five kilometres from the school the children go to. The mother was in the focus group and she offered to be visited. There were four children for the couple and the mother was pregnant. There were also three orphans living with this family. Their parents died of AIDS. The biological children's ages were 10, 8, 5, and 2 and for the orphans ranged between 14, 10 and 7. The 14 year old was in P 6, the two-10 year-olds were in P 3 the 8 year old in was P 2 while the 7 year old was in P 1. All the children go to the same school, about five kilometres away from home. It is a UPE school. I was informed that in the cases where the schools are far from home the children have to start school at about 7 years in order to cope with the distance they have to travel. I arrived at this home at 10:30 am and left after 7:00 pm. By the time I arrived at this home the parents and the older children were still in the garden.

The only literacy artefacts I saw in this home were the children's exercise books. The P 2 and P 1 children had three exercise books each, one for Mathematics, one for English and the third everything else. When I checked the books I found that there were some exercises but they had only a few numbers in each and some were not marked though some were dated some months back. The 'general' book had work of SST, Science, Handwriting and Fine Art. The older children had four exercise books each. I asked the parents about buying textbooks for the children but they told me that

if they had money they would have bought some but they cannot afford. “They are very expensive and we just cannot afford them,” the father said.

Later I asked the children whether they see any other written material at home. They told me that sometimes they buy things and they are wrapped in old newspapers but they said that they had never bothered to read such pieces of paper.

There was a radio but I was told that it is only switched on when it is time for news and some discussion programs of the father’s interest because ‘...we cannot waste the expensive batteries on just any program,’ the mother told me.

In this home the house is made of mud and wattle. There is one table, three chairs and a bench. Some of the children sleep on the floor. The children’s clothes and beddings are not so clean and some are torn. The water source, borehole, is about one and a half kilometres away and there is no electricity. They use tadooba for lighting at night. The kitchen is a small grass-thatched hut a few metres from the main house.

### **Home 5**

This was another rural home but approximately three kilometres from the school. Both parents were peasants. The mother was in the focus group and she volunteered to be visited. The mother studied up to P 5 and her parent had no money to keep her in school any longer. “I had grown big, I was about 16 years old they (the parents) wanted me to marry before I conceive and embarrass them,” she explained.

The father in this home lost his father while in P 7 and that marked the end of his education. They had six biological children aged 16, 13, 11, 9, in school. Their classes were S 1, P 6, P 5 and P 3 respectively and the other two were aged 5 and 3 and had not started school. They had other children staying with them because the home was near the school. I was told that during school time this home caters for nine children. I visited the home during holidays when the other children had gone back to their homes. I arrived at this home at 10:10 am and left after 6:00 pm.

Like home 4, there were hardly any literacy artefacts in this home. I saw children’s exercise books. Compared to what I had seen in the urban homes the work done at school as reflected in the exercise books was very little. When I asked about the difference I was told that the teachers do not give much work because “they have a lot of pupils in their classes and marking would be even more difficult than they find it now if they gave a lot of work to the learners.” There were many unmarked exercises in the books I saw. Fellow learners marked some exercises. I was told that the learners are sometimes asked to exchange the books then the teacher reads out the correct answers as they mark each other’s books.

The children in this home had four exercise books each. I asked the mother how she copes with looking after so many children. She said that she sells some items like

sugar canes, ripe bananas, maize and groundnuts at the school during mid morning and lunch break. This gives her some money to cater for the domestic needs and provide the children with books and pens. “Their father is not so much bothered,” she said.

Later I asked the children whether they see any other written material at home. The older two told me that they sometimes borrow some textbooks from the teachers without the headmaster’s knowledge. They said that the headmaster does not want the school books to be taken out of the classrooms. They also admitted that though sometimes they buy things wrapped in old newspapers, they had never bothered to read such pieces of paper.

There was a radio but for most of the time I was in this home it played only music. The children seemed to be interested in music only. I asked the mother whether they sometimes listen to news and she confessed that she had no time for that. She said that her husband listens to news and other discussion programs and “when there is anything interesting he tells us and he sometimes discusses some of those things with the bigger children.”

In this home the house is made of mud and wattle with an iron roof but it seems rather small to accommodate a family of that size. There is one table and a few chairs. Some of the children sleep on the floor. The children’s clothes and beddings are not so clean and some are tattered. The water source is a well about two kilometres away and the water looks milky and there is no electricity. The lighting they use are small ‘lamps’ made from small tins. A hole is made through the cover and a wick is inserted through that hole down to the paraffin, which is put in the tin. It is called “tadooba” in Lusoga.

## **Home 6**

It was polygamous home. The man had four wives and eighteen children. The oldest was 22 and he had married and started his own family. The youngest was about three months old. Four children were already in secondary school, seven were in primary and the six had not yet gone to school. The man was a grocer in the trading centre nearby. The women were just housewives. All the parents had gone to school but none had gone beyond P 7. This home was about six kilometres away from the primary school the children go to. The man was part of the parents’ focus group and volunteered to be visited. He has seven children in this school. I arrived at this home at about 9:30 am and left after 6:00 pm.

Like home 4 and 5, there were hardly any literacy artefacts in this home. There was a calendar in the sitting room. I saw children’s exercise books. The P 7 boy had borrowed the textbooks of Science and SST from his teacher “... because the teacher likes me because I perform well in class. He wants me to keep reading during the holidays.” This boy’s books were neater than the rest in this home and those I had

seen in the other rural homes and showed that he was bright child. He told me that the father could not buy him textbooks “because if he did then all the other children would also demand and he cannot buy for everybody.”

There was a radio in this home but nobody showed any interest in it except the little children who enjoyed dancing whenever there was music playing on it. When I asked two of the mothers whether they ever listen to any other programs they confessed they sometimes do but it was not a habit they were keen on.

The house in this home is also made of mud and wattle visibly too small for the whole family. Two of the big boys have constructed their own grass-thatched huts in the compound and some of the young children are staying with the elder brother. There is one table and several chairs. The children’s clothes and beddings are not that clean and some are tattered and some of the young children stayed half naked all the time I was there and no one seemed bothered. There is a borehole about one and half kilometre away from the home. There is no electricity. The conditions are not all that conducive for private study. The houses are very close to each other and there is a lot of noise in the compound all the time.

### **How the parents initiate and carry on the acculturation of the literacy**



#### **Home 1**

English is the main language used in this home. The mother said she starts teaching the children counting and the alphabet as soon as they begin talking intelligibly. “That is when they are about two years old. We speak to them in English from childhood because we are from different linguistic groups and we find it easier to communicate using English even when we are by ourselves,” she explained. She uses the charts to make them start recognising the figures and the letters when they are about three years old. She told me that even when they start going to nursery school at age four she continues teaching them some things at home. During my stay she gave the P 3 and P 1 children work and told them to go to their rooms to do it. She also sent off the P 6 boy to go and do his homework.

The children told me that during holidays and weekend they have to do academic work given by the parents and the ‘teacher’, which they do between breakfast and lunch and at night before supper. The ‘teacher’ is actually a trained teacher who comes around to coach the children and is paid for it. The mother told me that when she is around she manages the children’s time to ensure that they do their homework. She checks on the younger children’s work while the father checks on the older boy’s. They did this when I was there. The father said he has to check on the work “...just to make sure the ‘teacher’ is not paid for no work done and to see that the boy is making progress.”

I learnt that these children start watching their parents' work with books from infancy because the father is businessman and the mother is a dentist lecturer in a nursing school. They usually carry some of their work home and the children watch them do it. "To avoid a lot of disturbance you give the child a book or paper and a pen to keep them busy doodling as you work. As they grow you introduce some meaningful work. You write for them numbers and letters and tell them to write as they copy what you have written for them," the father explained.

In the afternoon we watched a videotape together. It was a recording of a wedding. Later we watched the TV together. It was the news telecast. They all watched and listened very attentively and after the programme each child was over they asked many questions and the parents explained everything in detail. The parents told me that they also listen to and discuss some radio programs with the children especially the big boy. When I asked the father the programs he enjoys discussing with the boy he said, "we have a good time with any thing political and sports". The father buys the newspapers and tells the big boy to read and they also discuss what they read from the newspapers.

*[This showed me that they watch TV together and discuss what they see. This was a good way of developing the children's listening skill and critical thinking, which are both vital in the academic endeavour.]*

## Home 2



I observed that in this home both Lusoga and English are used. The mother said she uses both languages because, on the one hand, she stays with many other people who cannot speak English but who must communicate with the children and yet on the other hand she wants her children to get the LOE as early as possible so that they can do well in school. She said she starts teaching the children counting and the alphabet as soon as they begin talking clearly at about two years old. She told me that she never took any of her children to nursery school. She prepared them for school herself.

She buys a lot of children books. "Before they could start school I would buy them the picture books which they would start 'reading' from around three years. They would see the pictures and we would speak about them both in Lusoga and in English. Later I would give them the books of pictures accompanied with words and they start associating the words with the pictures. Then we would move to pictures with short sentences." She said that she has always created the time for her children.

She said that her children start experiencing the world of books from childhood "...because they always watch me prepare my lesson and mark the students' books. I have to keep them busy so that they can let me do my work. When they were younger I had to make them sit beside me with their own books doodling or drawing anything.

I used to tell them folk stories and sometimes I would read bedtime stories to them. All these taught them how to concentrate from an early age.” Eventually they started reading the stories for themselves and to me.

“Now they that they are big I give some work to do and they go to their room and do it. I have to mark it before I let them play or watch the TV,” she explained. She said that when she is not busy she watches TV and listens to the radio with her children. “I taught them to listen attentively because I ask them questions about what we see and hear on both the TV and the radio.” If I do not watch the news they have to tell me about some of the news items that were in the programme. She said that she enjoys playing scrabble and chess with them because she knows that these games train them to think and in addition scrabble enriches their vocabulary. She also tells them to read the newspapers and together they discuss the some items, which interest them. She said that she tells them to write their shopping lists and they cost them together before she gives them money to buy the things they want before they go to school. “When they come for holidays I ask them to write down some of their experiences and you may not believe it but they are quite interesting,” she told me. I read some of the stories and they were really interesting.

This mother told me that she checks the primary children’s books regularly and she makes sure that any given homework is done correctly and provides all the textbooks and supplementary reader her children need. “The girl in secondary schools is doing very well especially in English Language and Literature,” she told me.

### **Home 3**

The father in this home is an accountant and the mother is a businesswoman. They are both well educated. They use mainly English in the home. Lusoga is spoken only when there are other people visiting the home. When I asked them why they said that they have many friends who do not speak Lusoga and they want their children to be fluent in English by the time they go to school “... because the schools we take them to teach in English. How will they cope if they go without knowing the LOE?” the mother asked. The children said they know Lusoga but do not speak it at home. They told me they learnt a lot of it from their playmates and they speak it when they are with their friends.

The children in this home also start learning to count and the alphabet early in life. The mother has to keep them busy when the father is working at his books. She does this by teaching them how to write the letters of the alphabet and the numbers. These children go to expensive schools from nursery. She continues giving them simple work to do at home. She told me that she looks at the books they use at school and gives them similar work to that they do at school. As they grow the parents buy them the textbooks, which are used at school and are told to do more exercises at home in addition to what the do at school.

The older children showed me their 'home books'. They told me that their parents make sure they do 'the home academic work' at home. They said that these are mainly exercises in English and Mathematics. "For SST and Science mommy tells us to read and when she comes home she fires you questions from the topics she told you to read. Then she looks at the exercises and gives you the ones for the next day." The 'home books' were very neat with very good work. I was told that in this home also there is a 'teacher' who comes to check on the children's work twice a week and tells the mother what should be done by his next visit. When the 'teacher' comes he marks the work and "...we discuss SST and Science before he goes," the boy in P 6 told me.

I was told that in the evening the parents watch the TV together with the children. I watched a video with the family before I left. They children were very attentively and we discussed many parts of it. The children asked many questions and the parents explained everything in detail. The parents told me that they also listen to and discuss some radio programs and watch TV with the children especially the big boys. When I asked the father the programmes he enjoys discussing with them he said they enjoy many programmes. The father buys the newspapers and tells the big children to read and they also discuss what they read from the newspapers.

#### **Home 4**

Lusoga is the language of communication in this home for one reason that it is the one the parents know and the second reason is that in the rural areas of the Iganga district it is rare to find people using other languages at home even when they know them. The parents told me they had gone up to P 3 and dropped out of school for lack of resources as their own parents had been poor.

They told me that they teach their children to count from 1 to 20 "...teach them a, e, i, o, u. Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, etc., and a few English words we can remember, but we trust that they are to learn a lot more in school." They said they teach them that because they hear such being taught (recited) as they pass by any school. They said that they cannot help with home work because they really do not understand much of what the children learn in school. "You can only look at the books to see √ (ticks) and X (crosses) and keep on encouraging the children to work hard at school." I learnt that the children hardly bring any homework home but when they do, if there is paraffin they are allowed to do it after supper but sometimes the children forget that they have homework to do or just doze off as they write the work. I was told that these children have to wake up very early to help with the domestic chores such as tethering the goats, washing the dishes before going to school.

For all the time I stayed (10:30am to around 7:00pm) I did not hear any talk about schoolwork. I asked to look at the books. I found that there were some exercises but they had only a few numbers in each and some of the books were almost in tatters. I asked the children whether they read at all at home during holiday and they said they

do not for the reason that they hardly find time because there is a lot of work to be done in the garden and at home.

### **Home 5**

In this home the parents were not highly educated. Like in Home 4, Lusoga is the only language of communication. The father can speak a bit of English but said he does not speak it with the children. He said he expected them to learn it from school. These parents also told me that they teach their children to count from 1 to 20 "...teach them a, e, i, o, u. Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, etc. The mother said she tries to tell them a few English words she knows.

I learnt that these children also hardly take homework home. When they are given time to do it. The parents said they do not help with homework because they think that would be cheating. They want the children to do it on their own "...to show that they are learning what they are being taught at school." I learnt that the parents ask the older children to teach the younger ones a bit of English.

For all the time I stayed (10.00am to around 6.00pm) I did not hear any talk about schoolwork.

### **Home 6**



In this home the parents were not highly educated. Like in homes 4 and 5 Lusoga is the only language of communication. The parents can speak a few words of English but said they do not speak it with the children. I tried to speak to one of the mothers in English but she was very shy. I asked her why she was so shy and she divulged that she fears to speak it because her co-wives and the villagers "...can easily say that she is showing off." They also said they expected the children to learn it from school. The mothers also told me that they teach their children to count from 1 to 100 or as far as the children can go and "...teach them a, e, i, o, u. Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, etc. There was one mother who said she is trying to learn a few words English from her children.

Two of the mothers had never been to school. These admitted that they hardly look at their children's books "... because we cannot understand what is in them." The other two said they look at the books "...just to see whether there are any ticks and we encourage the children to work hard at school. When you see ticks there you know that the child is learning something at school," they explained. They told me that their children do not bring any homework. They added that even if they did they, the mother, would not be in position to help them and yet the father is too busy looking for money to support the big family.

I arrived at this home at about 9:30 am and left at 6:00 pm. I did not hear any talk about schoolwork and I did not see any child trying to read.

I asked some of the children whether they read at all at home during holiday and they said they do not. Only one boy told me that he revises his books and reads the ones he borrows from his teacher. He said the other children just play and visit other homes in the neighbourhood the moment they finish their share of the work to be done in the garden and at home.

*[This means that while the urban parents put in a lot of effort and resources to initiate and foster the acculturation of the education process for their children the rural parents do not. The most salient reasons for the discrepancy seem to be lack of resources, sheer ignorance and lack of education among the rural parents.]*

### **The kind of interaction that goes on between the parents and the children (P-C) and the home's physical environment**

#### **Home 1**

In this home I observed that the interaction between the parents and the children was very fruitful, cordial, friendly and educative. The parents discuss a lot of issues with their children. They ask the children many questions which stimulate the thinking process and make them analyse different situations e.g. when they are watching TV together.

I also observed that these children speak freely to their parents and ask a lot of questions. The parents answer the children's question and by so doing the children learn a lot from their parents. I witnessed a lot of discussions of academic work and explanations about issues in social life. A lot of jokes were shared and the parents appeared to be interested in whatever their children had to say.

#### **Home 2**

The interaction between the mother and the children in Home 2 was much similar to that in Home 1. It was free interaction, very fruitful, jovial, warm and educative. They appeared to be very close and the mother said, "My children are my soul mates".

A lot of questions were asked by the mother to enable the children think. The children also asked plenty of questions which were answered truthfully with untiring effort. The mother gave plenty of unsolicited explanations whenever she thought it necessary and whenever the children sought them. In this home too, a lot of jokes were shared especially as we played scrabble. The mother enjoyed playing around with the children. It seemed so natural and I could see that is part of their daily life.

When time for academic work came the mother gave a lot of supportive explanations and guidance to the children.

### **Home 3**

The interaction between the parents and the children in home 3 was not very different from that took place in homes 1 and 2. It was free and relaxed interaction, very pleasant, fruitful, warm and educative. A lot of questions were asked by the parents to make the children think and understand whatever was going on. The children also asked plenty of questions, which were all answered truthfully. The parents gave plenty of explanations whenever they thought it necessary and whenever the children sought them. In this home too a lot of jokes were shared.

The parents talked freely about the HIV/AIDS and the children appeared well informed on the topic. The parents told me that they have discussed that topic at length because as they watch TV and listen to the radio a lot is said about it that they continue telling the children about it because some of the children are already in the vulnerable age bracket. They added that they have lost some relatives who have died of it so they find it an easy topic to discuss.

### **Home 4**

In this home there was not much interaction between the parents and the children other than instruction about the domestic chores the children had to do and the errands they had to run. Later I learnt that the father hardly stays home during day. He comes home late and drunk. One child told me that sometimes he beats up the mother and that the children are all scared of him. I also learnt that one of the orphans who was staying with them married a few months ago at the age of 16. "She could not cope any longer and she just decided to marry," the wife said.

The man stayed for sometime and left. Everybody seemed relieved at his departure. The mother seemed free with the children when out of the father's sight. The mother said that sometimes when he is sober he tells them about the news and rumours around the village "...but we are too scared of him to pay him a lot of attention."

According to the mother the children do not ask questions because "...even the culture does not allow that. We never used to ask questions when we were growing up. Good children are expected to listen to the grown-ups not to ask them questions." She added that they just talk about whatever topic might come up but other than encouraging them they hardly discuss academics.

### **Home 5**

In this home the situation was better than in Home 4. The atmosphere seemed relaxed. The parents talked to the children freely. But the children mainly listened. Most of interaction was about the chores the children had to do. There were hardly any responses from the children or discussion. According to the father the children are "not really expected to ask question except if they have not understood what you have sent them to do."

The children told me that they are not expected to ask “many questions” about anything and that they never discuss anything about school with their parents. I learnt that the father works as a casual labourer in a hospital about five kilometres away and he comes home tired. The mother is too busy with domestic duties so there is hardly any time to discuss anything with the children.

### Home 6

In this home there was not much parent-children interaction either. I learnt that the father spends most of his day at the shop. When he closes the shop he first goes to drink and in most cases he comes home when most of the children are already asleep.

The mothers were like the other rural mothers. They did not expect the children to ask them questions and had no time ask the children a lot of questions as long as the children did whatever they were instructed to do correctly.

### The parents’ general attitudes, values and ideologies about the children’s education

Table 1 shows the parents general attitudes, values and ideologies about their children’s education.



Urban parents’ attitudes, values and ideologies	Rural parents’ attitudes, values and ideologies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have very positive attitudes towards their children’s education.</li> <li>• They hold high values and strong ideologies about education in general and that of their children in particular.</li> <li>• They believe that education is the best gift a parent can give a child because it holds the key to success and comfortable life.</li> <li>• They are ready to buy the textbooks and other materials required by the children at all levels.</li> <li>• They take their children in good schools right from nursery school.</li> <li>• They are ready to pay whatever it takes to make their children excel in school.</li> <li>• They believe that excelling in school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have very positive attitudes towards their children’s education.</li> <li>• They believe that success in school is the only way for achieving social and economic mobility.</li> <li>• They believe that excelling in school can enable their children to get good jobs, be liberated from poverty, help the parents and educate the siblings.</li> <li>• They admit that sometimes what they provide for the children may not be enough but it is what they can afford.</li> <li>• They believe that the children should work hard and the teachers should teach hard to make the children pass exams.</li> <li>• They expected the government to provide everything required for the</li> </ul>

<p>is a strong signal to success in life and a good future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They value high disciplined and believe that it fosters academic achievements.</li> <li>• They believe that working together with the teachers and following up the children’s schoolwork is essential to their academic success.</li> </ul>	<p>education for the education of the citizens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They were of the view that MOI should be the LOE.</li> <li>• They believe that children should be disciplined and have strong morals.</li> <li>• They expected the teachers to be the exemplary role models.</li> </ul>
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### Home 1

In addition to the above, the parents in home 1 told me that they believe that children should be helped to excel in school. They said that this can be possible if:

- The children go to good schools, which have good standards.
- The children are disciplined.
- They work hard under professional and supportive guidance.
- They have a good command of the LOE.

### Home 2

The parent in home 2 emphasised that for her “...There is no compromise. Education of my children comes first in my life.”

She said that she believes in excellence in school as a signal to success in life and a good future, which, she explained, “is all I wishes for my children”.

She went on to explain that it is important to put in place what one thinks can help for one to achieve an objective. For this reason, she said, she is ready to work as hard as it takes to sustain her children in good schools. She said that another way of working towards this goal is to ensure that the children are very organised in whatever they do. She concluded, “In the education process you must give in order to receive.”

### Home 3

The parents in home 3 emphasised that the children’s education was paramount.

### Home 4

The parents in home 4 emphasised that, “Every one wants their children to excel in school. I do my best to provide what I can but then it is not enough. There is not much I can do about it,” the mother explained.

They acknowledged their predicament, which they blamed on poverty and ignorance. They said poverty limits their efforts to provide their children with all the school requirements let alone taking them to the good schools. As peasants they find it almost impossible to raise money to pay in school when they can hardly feed themselves and their big family.

They also acknowledged that they did not know that visiting the school was ‘all that important’.

### **Home 5**

The parents in home 5 stressed that they believe that success in school is the only way for achieving social and economic mobility which can only be achieved through excelling in school that can enable their children to get good jobs, help the parents and educate the siblings and ‘liberate the whole family’.

These parents also acknowledged their predicament, which they blamed on poverty and ignorance. They said poverty limits their efforts to provide their children with a good deity, medical care and all the school requirements let alone taking them to the good schools. These parents were very bitter about the MOI in their children’s school. They were of the view that MOI should be the LOE. “How do you expect the children to pass exams in English when they are taught in Lusoga?” the mother asked.

The mothers were of the view that children should work hard and pass the exams without cheating.

### **Home 6**

In home the father emphasised that “Without education one has no future,”

“The government should provide books and pens and free university education as it was the case in the 1960s and 1970s,” the father added.

*[What came out clearly was the fact that all parents want their children to excel in school and they all believe that education is the only key to social and economic status. The only mitigating factor is that while the urban parents have the ability to influence their children’s education the rural parents are handicapped by poverty.]*