

**ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR THE PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED PUPILS  
UNDER THE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN UGANDA:  
A CASE STUDY OF KAMPALA DISTRICT.**

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## ABSTRACT

Education is one of the basic social services the country can offer its people because it positively affects socio - economic behaviors such as productivity in the workplace, living standards, demographic, reproductive and health behavior.

Despite it being one of the basic human rights, children with disabilities have, over the years, persistently faced problems in attaining this social service. They comprise one of the most socially excluded groups in all societies. The World Bank asserts that in developing countries, the vast majority of these children receive no education, are absent in school datasets and are invisible on the national policy agenda.

The current NRM Government attaches great importance to the development of education in Uganda for it recognizes the fact that education is a powerful tool for the transformation of society. This is clearly stipulated in its 1995 constitution where Article **30** of the constitution states. “All persons have a right to education”. [the disabled inclusive]. This also partly explains why the Government of Uganda launched the free Universal Primary Education in January 1997. Some of its key features was that children with disabilities should have priority over the non – disabled children.

However, the program has not effectively catered for the special education needs of children with physical disabilities. Statistics show that actually there is no increased enrollment of the disabled children despite this free government education program. There has actually been a problem in the accessibility to educational services by the physically impaired pupils under Universal Primary Education program and reasons for this have been unknown so this called for a scientific investigation to explore the socio-economic, socio cultural and policy factors that explains this problem; a task this study undertook.

The study was carried out in Kampala district, and respondents were selected from at least each division among the five divisions of this district. The sample size was **70** respondents in the categories of head teachers of primary schools, pupils with physical disabilities, able-bodied pupils; officials from the Ministry of Education, officials from the NGO related sector and parents of the disabled children.

The findings of the study revealed that actually the issue of accessibility by the physically impaired pupils under the Universal Primary education is affected by many factors which can be categorized under the school related, policies/laws and social-economic/cultural factors. Under the school related factors it was noted that the nature of the schools is not user friendly. Most of them are double storeyed, with no ramps but instead they have steps. Schools have no teachers trained in special needs education, no special curriculum, high teacher pupil ratio and over congestion in the classrooms.

Under the policies related factors it was realized that there are a number of good International and local policies that are in place advocating for the education of children with physical disabilities. However, the problem lies in the fact that they are not effectively implemented and enforced hence leaving them good on paper but not serving their major objectives.

Socio- cultural/socio-economic factors showed that negative attitudes towards children with disabilities stem right from their homes where they are born and this forces their parents to deny them their basic rights like a right to education. Negative attitudes coupled with the high levels of poverty in Uganda really aggregate the problem of accessibility to education. Education of

children with disabilities is very expensive the parent needs to buy assistive devices like wheel chairs, white cane sticks, which the government does not provide through its UPE Program.

More to this the community at large also has negative attitudes towards these children so they do not give them enough support when it comes to accessing this social service yet they are also some of the major key players. Negative attitudes then later stretches to the children themselves and they lose their self esteem and some end up performing poorly in class while others drop out of school.

The research therefore recommends that if the problem of accessibility to educational services by the physically impaired pupils under the UPE Program is to be solved, there must be an integrated interplay between all these factors and interventions from all the sectors to make their education a reality. However, more emphasis should be laid on the government intervention since all the factors rotate around its support as the founding member of UPE.