

# Education Policy Reforms And Innovation During Covid-19 Era Uganda: Empirical Lessons From Central Sub-Region Of Uganda

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**Abstract:** *Over the years education policy reforms and innovations in pedagogy of education fields at the high institution levels, in the central sub-region in Uganda. The study was guided by three objectives: to find out the contribution education policy shapers in Uganda. To examine how education policy and theories influence transformative students' performance during covid-19 era. To analyses the how the ministry education is overridden by Politicians and Ministry of health. The study adopted mixed methods and a case study designed to provide the in-depth understanding of study variables. The further used positivist philosophy guided by Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky' constructivism theories. The study findings indicate: There was significant positive influence of education policies and shapers. The education policy shapers have insignificant contribution to effective education service delivery during covid-19 era and it further concluded that there was a significant contribution of policy shapes in Uganda. The study recommends efforts to make Hands on Pedagogy and integral component implementing a STEM program. The study recommends for education policy shapers to take positive action during era of covid-19 challenges in Pedagogy so as to enhance effectiveness and better performance in central sub-region of Uganda.*

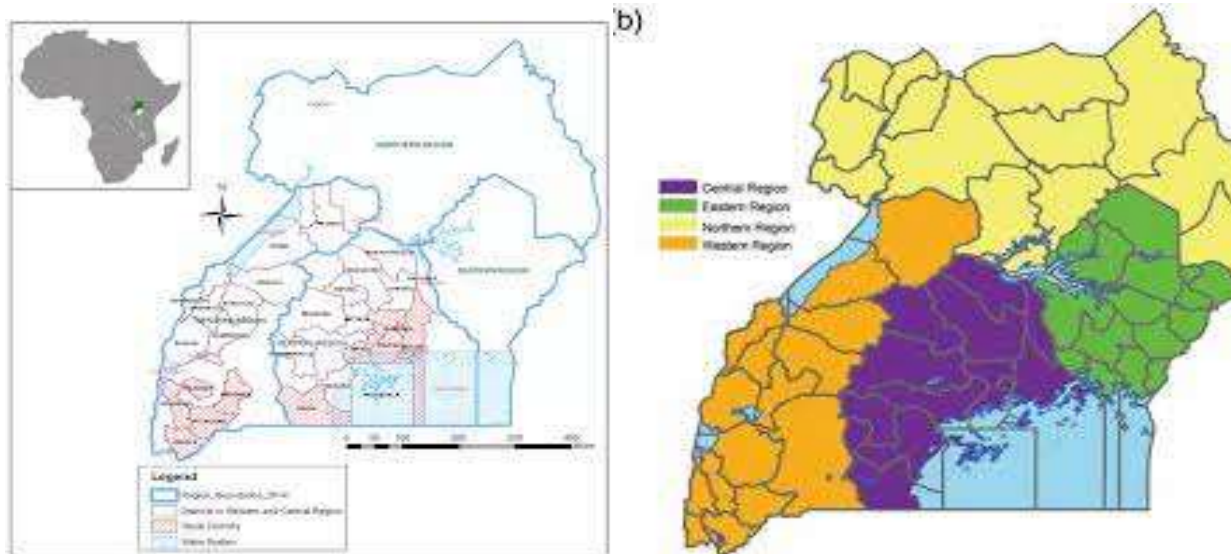
**Keywords:** *Pedagogy, Policy reform, Education policy Shapers, Innovations*

## Introduction

Over the decades educational policy shapers have been relevant across the world in the field of education especially at higher education levels. During Covid-19 era in Uganda we have observed a number of challenges and the existing knowledge gaps in higher education policy that calls for the educational reform to the existing educational policy in Uganda. This article provides the challenges, theories and a critique on the existing policy shapers and gives the benefits of the policy analysis in Uganda. The study upholds and recommends the educational policy shapers to take a lead action of problem solving in the education sector, if at all education is to remain relevant in the contemporary era of covid-19 challenges. It also examines different the views from different scholars that, shapes the policy and the underlying logic theories of education policy in Uganda.

A policy is a law and an administrative instrument of action (Ruffert, 2020). A policy is a decision making instrument that, spells out the criteria and procedures of what the government decides to do or not do (Carey et al., 2017). However, it should be noted that, Ugandas education policy shapers as of now, are heavily influenced by Politicians that provides negative directions as far as education is concerned. The author is over the view that, great brains think alike and therefore, the leaders of the country and those entrusted with educational matters must be critical on the pedagogical synergy, and the direction undertaken during covid-19 pandemic episode, if we are to remain relevant in the field of education. In the interest of higher education policy analysis, it is part of the broader concern of scientific and policy makers. One of the most significant education policies at the state level among others is education funding policy and activities, which it gives the criteria on how the state distributes funds to schools without prejudice or discrimination. Therefore policy analysts and critical theorists say that, "...policy should be driven by strong commitment towards education and social change equality" (Kurtz, 2005). He further contends that, there is no country men and women, who are better that the quality of its education system. It is on that ground therefore, that this article commends the educational policy analysts' and shapers to put on different lenses that visualize the knowledge gaps, that were a crude during covid-19 era. There is need therefore, for the Ministry of education and sports, to remain focused so as to break, the paradigm of changing the world as Kar max puts it in his assertions (Ahl et al., 2018). All educational policy reforms, need to undertake logical actions and processes that calls for the use of multidisciplinary approach of involving all stakeholders so as to own and embrace the policy (King, 2015). The policy content is developed basing on the existing values, assumptions, and ideologies of the government. For instance, in Uganda the policy seems to have very good content on the paper, but during covid-19 era, we are therefore finding a lot challenges and knowledge gaps in the implementation that need to be underpinned for effective service delivery.

### THE MAP AFRICA SHOWING UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL SUB-REGION



Sources: (<http://goafrica.about.com/library/bl.mapfacts.uganda.htm> and <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/ug.htm>)

Despite the remarkable good educational system in Uganda and presence of Covid-19, challenges have posed a significant change and portrayed an ill-structure education policy (Lingenfelter et al., 2018). However, there are a number of knowledge gaps and inappropriate issues in the education service delivery. The article therefore, critically examines the governance system and education services as guided by education policies in central Sub-region of Uganda. The central sub-region was purposively selected due to the fact that it was endowed with many education institutions. In this case, the universal secondary education policy leaves a lot to desire in the implementation and there is also need for reforms that address the knowledge gaps. Azzi, (2017) affirms that, the fact remains that, most of the challenges are rotates around financing and appropriate implementation of education activities. Therefore, the call for reforms on the educational policies are timely because they will address the knowledge gaps, and come up with relevant strategies and theories that will answer the current problems facing the high education sector during covid-19 challenges in Uganda.

### Methodology

The article adopts a singular method that the enabled gathering qualitative data It also employed a case study design for the purposes of getting an in-depth and clear understanding of the study variables (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The choice of method was informed by the belief of narrow views in the world characterised by positivist orientation and approach of the unit of inquiry. The positivists believe that using singular method in undertaking social science research may have particular strengths with respect to the subject matter of inquiry and will provide a clear picture on the variables under study. The study sampled 449 study participants' representative using simple random, stratified and purposive approaches. The article was further driven by the philosophy of positivism and epistemological stance which successfully enabled the study come up with truth from the unit of inquiry and ultimate reality (Noddings, 2018). The articles interest is to provide, accurate and reliable information during this covid-19 episode

### Results

The findings of this article clearly indicate that, the education polices in Uganda were greatly affected during covid-19 era. It is now close to two years since the Ministry of education and sports are operating on a low profile. This alone implies that, there are insignificant contributions of education systems and the shapers of education policy in Uganda during covid-19 episode. It was notable that, the Ministry of Health has overridden education policies (Nestel et al., 2019). It is very important to note that, there is need for effective and horizontal communication to harmonize the operation procedures of the two Ministries so that education system is not greatly suppressed in Uganda.

The first education policy shaper is the state government structure that, guides the education operational system. The state tries to make sure that there is an accountability of higher education institutions in order to meet the interests of the public. That should not lead to conflicts of interests between the states ministries goals and policy of accountability (Ehren & Baxter, 2020). In playing their roles, the state needs to approve their roles as established in the policy and constitution of Uganda. This seemed to work well for some time until the cold war of covid-19 pandemic where the state lost their grip on their roles especially to the private institutions.

However, in response to the new demands in the world and challenges of Covid-19 era, the state came up an idea to put up more community advanced colleges in order to meet the growing demands of the time, and also continuing to strengthen state organizations that acted as buffer between higher institutions and some state elected leaders (A.B.K, 2017). From here the state governments didn't look back but to continue with the theory change that led to addressing the public needs by controlling the growth of higher education and sustainable quality education. The education policy therefore, clearly stipulate institution plans to reducing conflicts of interest on resources, controlling the expansion of graduate programs and oversight role over new institutions (Alina et al., 2021). So, there are four main state policy roles are given herein, to provide strategies of resources use, regulating especially directing resources to particular purposes, advocating for consumers, and steering the educational activities.

Bhattarai et al., (2018) contends that, higher education policy do markets the education system and looks at having the consumers who are the students and the sellers who are the educational institutions exchanging money (fees) for goods and services (degrees). Because of the higher demand for higher education as a result of its benefits, the federal and state governments have adopted public policies that control the structure of education system. However, "even though market forces help to shape the degree of inequality, government policies shape those market forces."

According to Perna and Finney (2014), the testing hypothesis that was developed form the literature on privatization policy education and policy diffusion, there was a likelihood that states with more liberal governments. However, this also doesn't address the magnitude of educational challenges but looks at the state's political, historical, cultural, economic contexts that may lead to adoption of a particular policy (Lingenfelter et al., 2018).

Even though the dynamics of power, authority, and legitimacy comes in, the states are careful not to overstep their roles of oversight, approval of new campuses and new degree programs etc without interfering with the institutions' autonomy.

Shapers of education policy environments include: Legislatures, executive authorities, politicians, system design centralized or decentralized Board of governors (Lingenfelter et al., 2018). The consolidated Governing State Boards, Coordinating State Boards, and Planning Agencies refocus on the policies and their operationalisation. The policy performance and influence depends on policy shapers is the result of its status, reflective out an investments outcome and overall interest to policy. Hazelkorn, (2016) contends that, policy outcomes serve as rankings among competition and indicator for potential investors in public and private interests of the state. They can include statics and ratings, or the less quantifiable traits such as true quality, learning, and efficiency.

DePoy & Gitlin,(2019) say that, recent structural trends affect the policy implementation; delegation of power to lower tiers of governments, delegation to a specialized "buffer body", or delegation to the institutions themselves (Fielded, 2008) Involvement from "buffer body" agencies, orgs, and lobbies allow the government to distance themselves from accusations of intervention or infringing on academic institutional autonomy. Martinez asserts longevity is a key ingredient for trust between researchers and legislatures in the policy shaping.

### **Higher education policy.**

The findings indicate there are three major shapers as given by Shapiro, (2017), the education policy lives, the state government structures, educationalist and the judiciary also influence the operational system of the policy. About the dynamics of education policy will depend on political power, authority and legitimacy in the system.

However, I would like to add to this information that defining the roles of the state/federal and their bodies and the higher education institutions helped much to avoid power struggles. Last point, I agree in a higher education system notable for Jeffersonian suspicion of government, defined and transparent roles while also relying heavily of the legitamizing effect of competitions and user choice does alleviate pressure and power struggles.

I imagine the renegotiation of government involvement in Uganda, with the recent debates on education /free college tuition, would disrupt the traditional policy environment.

### **Dynamics of power, authority and legitimacy.**

In reading Faguet & Pöschl, (2015) contend that, the article goes beyond our tasks, one interesting point that was brought up in our group was the impact of the Jeffersonian effect, which leads to suspicion of the government. While more transparency or even less control could play a role in lessening this suspiciousness however, one wonders how conversations around free or publically funded higher education would shift the status quo. I believe, personally, that it would be interesting to see if this change would represent "too much" of a power shift, where private and public interests would be unlikely to find peace enough to compromise.

Specifically, to the many shapers that Perna and Finney outlined for us, it is also important to consider foundational implications of higher education policy and its creation. This made me; once again, think about whether or not policy analysis was made for or of policy. Specifically, I started thinking about contexts under which case, analysis for policy or analysis of policy, were more likely to be made (Curaj et al., 2015). This article made me, as well as to realize that it is very difficult to conduct one form of analysis without the other. As is stated in the article by Burton Clark, in reference to organizational shifts in the direction and focuses on the new adopted strategies, "Reform has had on main thrust: to bring more administered order to what is the most disorderly of all major advanced systems of education."

### **Critique of the policy and challenges**

There are two variants of policy and education analysis in Uganda. These variables of the education policy focus towards achieving education national objectives and goals. It is clear that, education policies are meant to address challenges and bridge gaps in the implementation system of education (Azzi, 2017). The policy is on effectiveness and efficiency of education programme, but they differ in terms of their goals and implementation of activities. For instance in Uganda, existing education policy leaves a lot to be desired basing on its strengths and weaknesses. There are a number of challenges and knowledge gaps that affect the effective and efficiency of service delivery.

The education policy may have flaws in their design from day one to current realities; however there are challenges and gaps that affect performance. After a short while the policy implementers lose direction and hence fail to address some particular issues of concern (Faguet & Pöschl, 2015).

Policy Options focuses on improving and revising the existing policy and also on positioning and analyzing problem to the existing policy among others factors. To use a simple analogy, the choice of whether to employ education Policy or Policy Options Analysis is rather like deciding whether to fix the challenges or use education policy.

This therefore implies that, policy presents the views that are within the field of education (Hill & Varone, 2014). Therefore I would argue that, there is a lot more overlap between the two aspects that includes: Education and politics that they even influence one another in the operation system. Policy can be politically motivated depending on what/whose interests are being served in the state. The education policy may be more objective basing facts however; politics may reverse the trend basing on its own interests.

### **Emphasis of the educational Policy and theory**

The educational policy and theoretical lenses of Ugandan education policy analysts and shapers must remain focused and with clear objectives to visualize the knowledge gaps and the fading sports in the education policy and theories. Otherwise the education system of the country is at shake if at all the educators are only looking on when the epidemiological conditions are overriding education system of Uganda. The rapid changes of covid-19 pandemic episode have exposed a number of gaps and theories that need immediate attention to underpin the underlying challenges. The author is of the view that, understanding of the knowledge gaps at least by 50% that is adequate to have it addressed with informed mind. This article therefore is meant to shade light to the contributions of educational policy shapers and having aright theory choice of approaches to underscore the increasing relative risks in education spheres of in the central sub-region and the entire country of Uganda.

For instance, looking at the application of the popular theories that have been developed on account for human learning at different levels in their lifestyle in Uganda during this episode of covid-19 challenges. It is noted that some of the most popular theories may not apply as required for effective education service delivery during this era of covid-19 pandemic.

### **1. Behaviorism**

Behaviorism equates learning with observable changes in activity (Chan, 2020). For example, in behaviorism, there is a focus on stimuli or a prompt to action is followed by a behavior change.

Behaviorism holds that the behavioral responses positively and when they are reinforced are more likely to reoccur in the future. We should note that behaviorists believe in a pre-set, external reality that is progressively discovered by learning.

Some scholars have also held that from a behaviorist perspective, learners are more reactive to environmental stimuli than active or proactive in the learning process (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

However, one of the most robust developments in the later behaviorist tradition is that of positive behavioral intervention and supports proactive techniques play a prominent role in enhancing learning within schools.

Such proactive behavioral supports include maximizing structure in classrooms, teaching clear behavioral expectations in advance, regularly using prompts with students, and actively supervising students' learning (Simonsen & Myers, 2015).



## 2. Cognitivism

The Cognitivism is partly inspired by the development of computers and an information-processing model believed to be applicable to human learning (Tukumbi, 2017)

It also developed partly as a reaction to the perceived limits of the behaviorist model of learning, which was thought not to account for mental processes. In cognitivism, learning occurs when information is received, arranged, held in memory, and retrieved for future use when it required.

Cognitivists are keenly interested in a neuronal or a brain-to-behavior perspective on learning and memory retention. Their lines of research often include studies involving functional brain imaging to see which brain circuits are activated during specific learning tasks (Salas et al., 2020).

Cognitivists are also keenly interested in how learning causes new connections to be made between individual brain cells and their broader neuronal networks.

Singh, (2021) affirms that, from the cognitivist perspective, individuals are viewed as very active in the learning process, including how they organize information to make it personally meaningful and memorable. Cognitivists, like behaviorists, believe that learning reflects an external reality, rather than shaping or constructing reality.

## 3. Constructivism

Constructivism holds, that from childhood onwards humans learn in successive stages (Rose, 2019). In these stages, we match our basic concepts, or “schemas,” of reality with experiences in the world and adjust our schemas accordingly. For example, based on certain experiences as a child, you might form the schematic concept that all objects drop when you let them go.

But let’s say you get a helium balloon that rises when you let go of it. You must then adjust your schema to capture this new reality that “most things drop when I let go of them, but at least one thing rises when I let go of it.” (Albers, 2017)

For constructivists, there is always a subjective component to how ultimate reality is organized. From this perspective, learning cannot be said to reflect a pre-set external reality (Singh, 2021). Rather, reality is always interplay between one’s active construction of the world and the world itself.

Therefore the emphasis must remain focused and clear on educational shapers to influence the educational policy framework and inform the theories of what is applicable during this contemporary situation in order to fix covid19 pandemic challenges and its aftermath in Uganda. In the same vein the author is of the view that, the education policy shapers and politicians working hand in hand with the ministry of education must not pave way for politicians and the ministry of health to override into the understanding of education Foucault's power and theories of Marxism (Bergez et al., 2019).

Vries & Vries, (2016) agree that, it comes down as a matter of authority, function and for who designs the established education policy. However, both the educators and politicians need to work in compliance.

However, it should be noted that, the theory of change is a common thread in the contemporary world of academia. There is need for a paradigm shift to improve on the quality service and rational choice of the government (Stanzel, 2019). Analysis for policy emphasizes the role of power, authority, and advocacy surrounding educational policy.

## The education policy analysis

The education policy analysis determines a number of variables in the education system today. It is good point that, analysis of the policy reforms brings about viable change the education system for the common good and this enhance quality services (Carey et al., 2017). Therefore analysis leads to policy reforms that give us new procedures and strategies in order to achieve set goals and milestones in a given time frame.

Bergez et al., (2019) affirms that, basic education policy analysis provides: formal cost-benefit analysis, qualitative cost-benefit analysis, modified cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis and the most common type of policy analysis, multi-goal policy analysis.

1. **Formal cost-benefit analysis:** This approach should be used if effectiveness and efficiency is the primary goal. This type of analysis reduces all the impacts of a proposed policy modification and alternative monetary cost (Campbell & Brown, 2015). Impacts on the cost involved and measures used in the implementation activities. For example, we could look at policy options relating to the government obtaining information about the public and break these down into monetary considerations.
2. **Qualitative cost-benefit analysis:** This approach, like the monetary cost-benefit analysis, begins by looking at potential impacts of policy and quality of the services provides by education policies (Campbell & Brown, 2015).

3. **Modified cost-benefits analysis:** This approach involves scoring qualitative and monetary goals separately. It looks at the argument budgetary efficiency and value for money during service delivery. For example, cannot be measured against political acceptability because these monetary and qualitative variables exist on different plains.
4. **Cost effectiveness analysis:** This approach is best used when both effectiveness and efficiency of the policy goal can be quantified but where the other goal cannot be monetized. The cost effectiveness analysis looks at two dimensions that is Fixed Budget approach the Fixed Effectiveness approach in which a given level of benefit is specified.
5. **Multi-goal policy analysis:** This approach is most commonly used in education policy analysis and policy options analysis because it is designed to deal with situations in which there are multiple possible policy goals.
6. **Policy Options Analysis,** on the other hand, begins with the assumption that an existing education policy is unworkable, flawed, irrelevant or all of the above and hence sets out to start anew trying to solve the basic education policy problem (A et al., 2021).

### Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion it is clear that education policy reforms in Uganda plays a very big role as a guiding document in enhancing quality service delivery and the reforms significantly contributes to what the government decides to do or not to do. It also provides rigor to the criteria, procedure, mechanism and approaches in a way of doing things basing on education system. It further leads to effectiveness and efficiency in education service delivery.

The article basing on the study findings and education policy implications recommends that:

Education policy reforms shapers the actors should provide appropriate evidence based actions in pedagogy for well-established process of service delivery in order to revamp education system in Uganda otherwise it is overridden during Covid-19 Era.

The initiatives of these education reforms are ideally focusing in causing a viable paradigm shift of the corrupted education systems and rekindle the teaching and learning systems in the central sub-region of Uganda grounded on mitigating covid-19 challenges.

The article recommends that, the Ministry of education and sports should undertake a formal cost-benefit analysis so as to remain functional in enforcing quality education service and support relevant popular theories in the education field of education for enforcing effective service delivery in the country.

Nevertheless the local government education officers should work in conjunction with Minister of education and sports and blend educational policies with feasible bylaws to promote appropriate education innovation that sharps teachers for quality services. It should also come up with applicable models and policy frameworks that are pro- qualitative of education cost-benefits and refocus education polices.

The article therefore strongly recommends for reforms, innovations and modification of educational policy that observe the cost-benefit analysis and post into cost-effectiveness for quality education system in Uganda.

Lastly the article recommends for adoption for advanced e-technology in education system so that learning is applicable with ease. The Ministry of education most importantly they should encourage and support education institutions to adopt e-learning and advanced technology the common good and in order to remain relevant in paradigm shift as a common thread that informs educational policy and framework in Uganda.

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