Who leaves school prematurely in Uganda; do predictors vary by place of residence?

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1. Background

Uganda is one of the first countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to introduce Universal Primary Education in 1997. Resultantly, primary school enrolments increased from slightly over 3 million in 1996 to close to 5.3 million in 1997 (Kakuba, 2014). As it has happened elsewhere, the primary education sector has equally been characterised by deteriorating indicators of internal efficiency, declining quality and dropouts partly due to enrolment shocks (Galimaka, 2008). Indeed, universalizing primary education has enabled many children to enrol in the first grade of primary although completion of primary has largely remained problematic. In this vein, survival to the end of primary has averaged about 30% in the past one decade (Ministry of Education & Sports, 2017). Although retention in school and by implication dropouts can be explained by inefficiencies in the school system, it has been found to affect some children in some households more than others and this seems to vary by place of residence (Inoue, Di Gropello, Taylor, & Gresham, 2015; Shann et al., 2013; Wodon, Nguyen, & Tsimpo, 2016).

1.1 Conceptualizing dropouts

The conceptualization of dropouts was informed by the CREATE conceptual framework on access, equity and transitions (Fig. 1). This approaches access, but most especially dropouts, not as a one-time event affected by factors at that time but also because of several other factors preceding the dropout. For this study, we are looking at children in zone 2 that are the majority in most of Sub-Saharan Africa and adopt Lewin's approach as we discuss the findings.

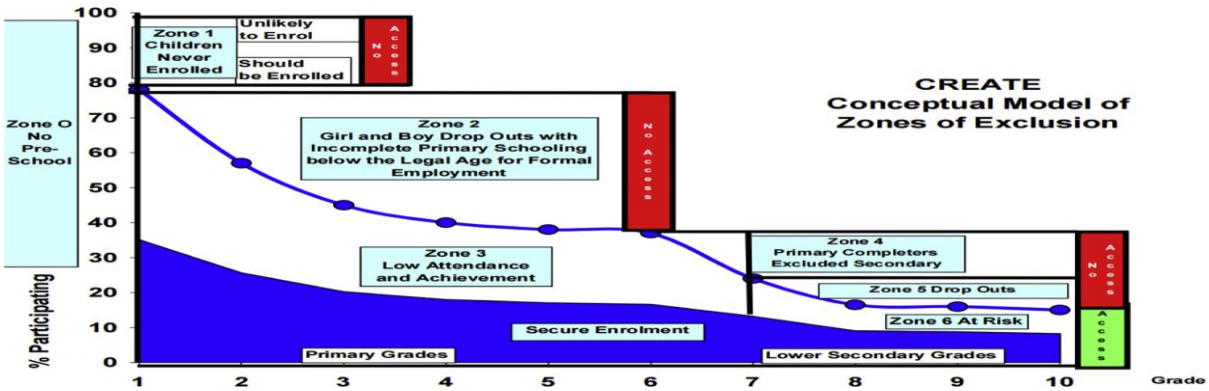

Figure 1. Access and Zones of exclusion from primary and secondary schooling.

1.2 Main Objective

The main objective of this paper is to isolate factors associated with dropping out of school for the children aged 6-16 years in Uganda by place of residence.

1.2.1 Specific objectives

i. To map and justify the proportions of children that drop out of school by place of residence
ii. To explore the effect of individual level factors on the probability of dropping out of school.
iii. To document the effect of factors linked to the household head on the probability of dropping out of school.
iv. To investigate the effect of household characteristics on the probability of dropping out of school
v. To study the effect of supply related factors on the probability of school dropout

2. Data and Methods

In this study, we mainly used Census Data for 2014 where information had been collected on the schooling status of the household population and several other individual, household and community level factors that have been hypothesised and documented to influence schooling outcomes (CEPED et al., 1999; UIS et al., 2004). We also used Education Management Information System (EMIS) data for 2014 to capture some variables related to the supply of education that we merged with census data. For this study, we delimited the study population to children aged 6-16 years. This is because the former is the official age for enrolling in primary school in Uganda while the latter is the official age for completing the ordinary level of education. We used the logit model to predict that a child aged 6 to 16 was enrolled in school as opposed to leaving school in 2014. We did this to limit errors arising from linking dropouts to characteristics of households before 2014 since we are not sure in which households they were when they dropped out. We present our independent variables in table 1.

Table 1: Hypothesised predictors for dropouts

Child Level factors	**Household Level factors**	**Community Level factors**
Age	Education of the head	Distance to nearest public primary school
Sex	Age of head	Distance to nearest private primary school
Orphan hood status	Sex of head	Proportion of heads with at least primary education
Disability Status	Marital status of head	Proportion of school age population per class
Relationship to head	Religion of head	Pupil-stance ratio per district
	Remittances	
	Wealth index of household	
	Proportion of under-fives	
	Proportion of older people (60+)	
	Household size	
	Main source of livelihood	

3. Results

We start by giving a snapshot of our population of interest as presented in figure 1. On the basis of the figure, we hereby make the following quick remarks; First, that never being enrolled reduced steadily with age. Secondly, the proportion of children that left school in both 2014 and before, increased with age. Thirdly, the proportion of the children attending school in 2014 increased with age up to about 11 years and declined thereafter. The latter scenario is reminiscent of late enrolment and late progression in the Ugandan education system that is also a precursor for dropouts (Kakuba et al., 2021).

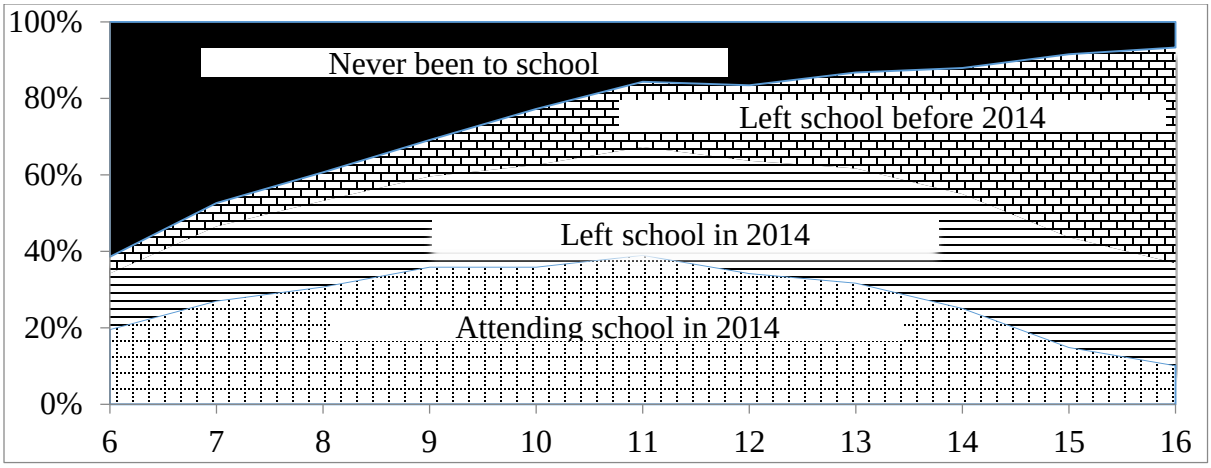

Figure 2: Education Status of children aged 6-16 by single ages

Table 2: A summary of Results from the logit Models

	RURAL UGANDA		KAMPALA		OTHER URBAN	
		Category affected		**Category affected**		**Category affected**
Sex of Child	++	Males		Not significant		Not significant
Age of Child	++	Older	++	Older	++	Older
Relationship to head	++	Other relative & Non Relative	++	Non relative	++	Other relative & Non Relative
Disability status	++	Disabled		Not significant	++	Disabled
Orphan hood status	++	Orphaned		Not significant	++	Orphaned
Education of head	++	Under less educated heads		Under more educated heads		Not significant
Sex of head	++	Under female heads		Not significant	++	Under female heads
Religion of head	++	Under Catholic heads		ns	++	Under Catholic heads
Marital status	++	Not in union		Not significant		Not significant
Household size	++	Under smaller households	++	Under smaller households	++	Under smaller households
Under-fives	++	Under roofs with more under-fives	++	Under roofs with more under-fives	++	Under roofs with more under-fives
Remittances	+	Under roofs that didn't receive	++	Under roofs that received	++	Under roofs that didn't receive
Wealth	++	Under poorer heads		Not significant		Not significant
Livelihoods	++	Under heads who benefited from other support		ns	++	Under heads who benefited from other support
Distance to Public Prim.	++	Located further from school		Not significant		Not significant

Distance to Private Prim.	++	Not significant		Located further from school		Not significant
Proportion of heads with primary education	++	Children in districts with a less proportion of heads		NA		Not significant
Pupil classroom ratio	++	Children in districts with a higher pupil classroom ratio	++	NA		Children in districts with a higher pupil classroom ratio

++ Significant at 1%, Yellow color shows variables/categories whose significance varies across place of residence

Conclusion

As can be seen in the table, the extent and factors affecting dropouts were found to vary by place of residence. This can be explained by variations in; history, geography, composition of the population, the nature of economic activity, supply of education and levels of commitment of local government authorities in school supervision. Action points to redress dropouts in Uganda cannot be implemented ubiquitously across the country but ought to take into consideration the peculiar circumstances pertaining in; i) Rural areas ii) Kampala (the capital) and iii) other urban areas.

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