

A national study of over-enrollment and repetition in Primary 1 grade in Uganda: What's the role of pre-primary?

Tara Weatherholt, Rehema Nabacwa, Rachel Jordan, & Luis Crouch





Funded by DFID East Africa Research
Fund (EARF)

Purpose of the Study

- Examine efficiency in primary one grade in Uganda through the collection of enrolment and repetition data, and pre-primary participation, in a nationally representative sample of pupils



Overview

1

What is education efficiency?

2

Objectives of the National Study


3

Findings from the National Study

4

Recommendations

What is Education Efficiency?

- All learners move through years of schooling at an appropriate rate and exit the system with the skills needed to participate meaningfully in the job market or go on to higher education (Lockheed, 1988)
- Internal efficiency  access to and flow through the education system
 - Gross and net enrolment
 - Promotion and repetition
 - Completion and dropout

Indicators of Education Inefficiency



1

Low primary school completion rates

2

Grade-specific enrolment rates well over 100%

3

Repetition rates that are much higher than officially reported

4

Limited or no access to pre-primary education

Uganda context

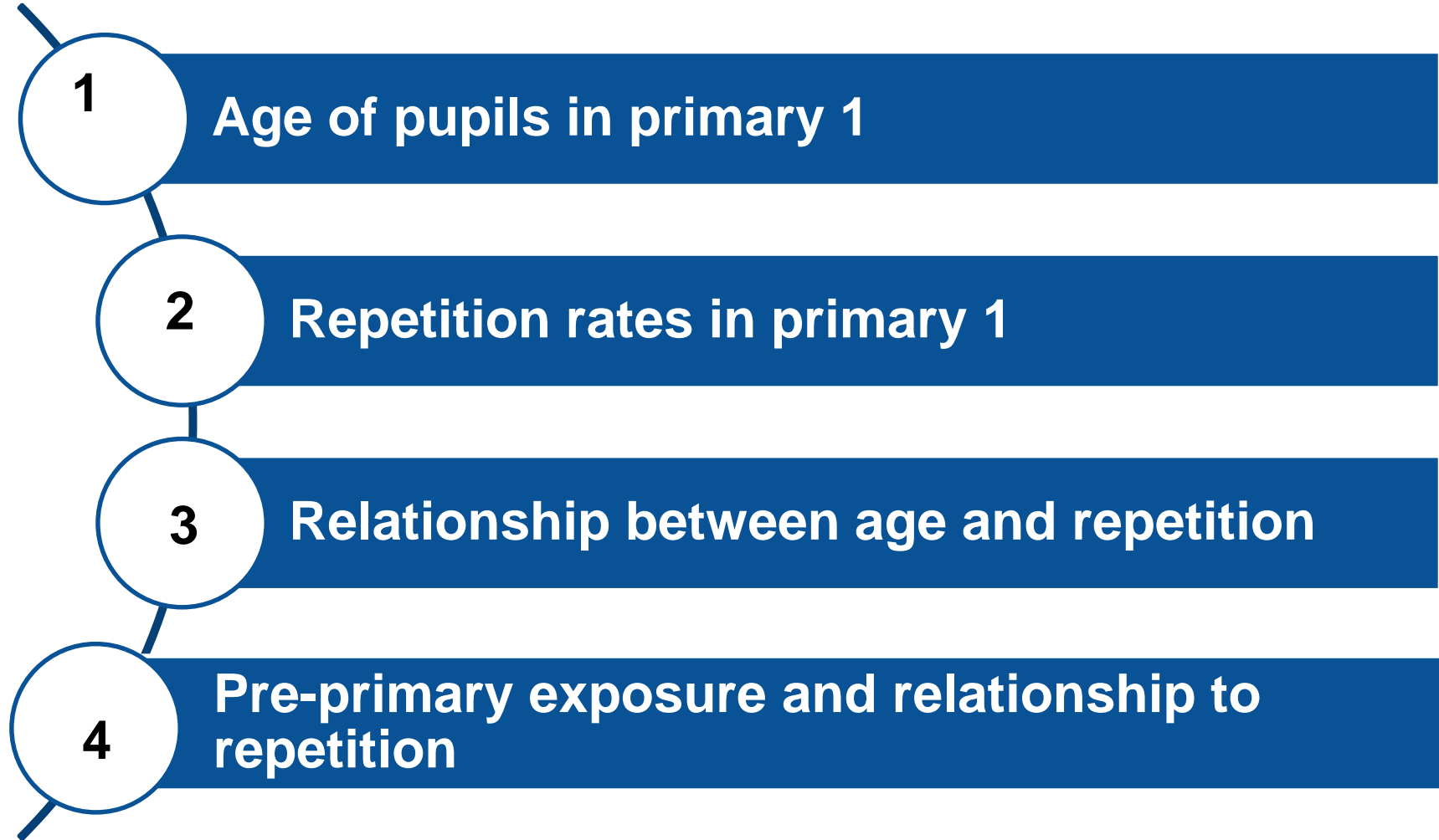


- **Gross enrollment rate has consistently been around 120% for Grade 1 while completion rates have remained at 60%**
- **2016 pilot study found repetition rates 30% to 40% higher than officially reported in Mbale and Kumi. (Brunette et al., 2016)**
- **Official reports suggest that the pre-primary enrolment rate in Uganda is low, at 13% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016)**
 - **Pre-primary education is not provided by the government in Uganda.**



National School Study 2017

Research Questions



Sampling Framework

- Nationally representative covering all regions
- Stratified simple random technique with proportional to size sampling

Participants

- 1440 pupils randomly selected from 120 schools across 24 districts
- 1439 teacher interviews
- 1318 parent/guardian interviews

Sample Description

- Mean pupil age 7.6 years
- 50% girls; 50% boys
- 9% reported to have disability
- SES evenly distributed across low, mid-low, mid-high, and high wealth indices

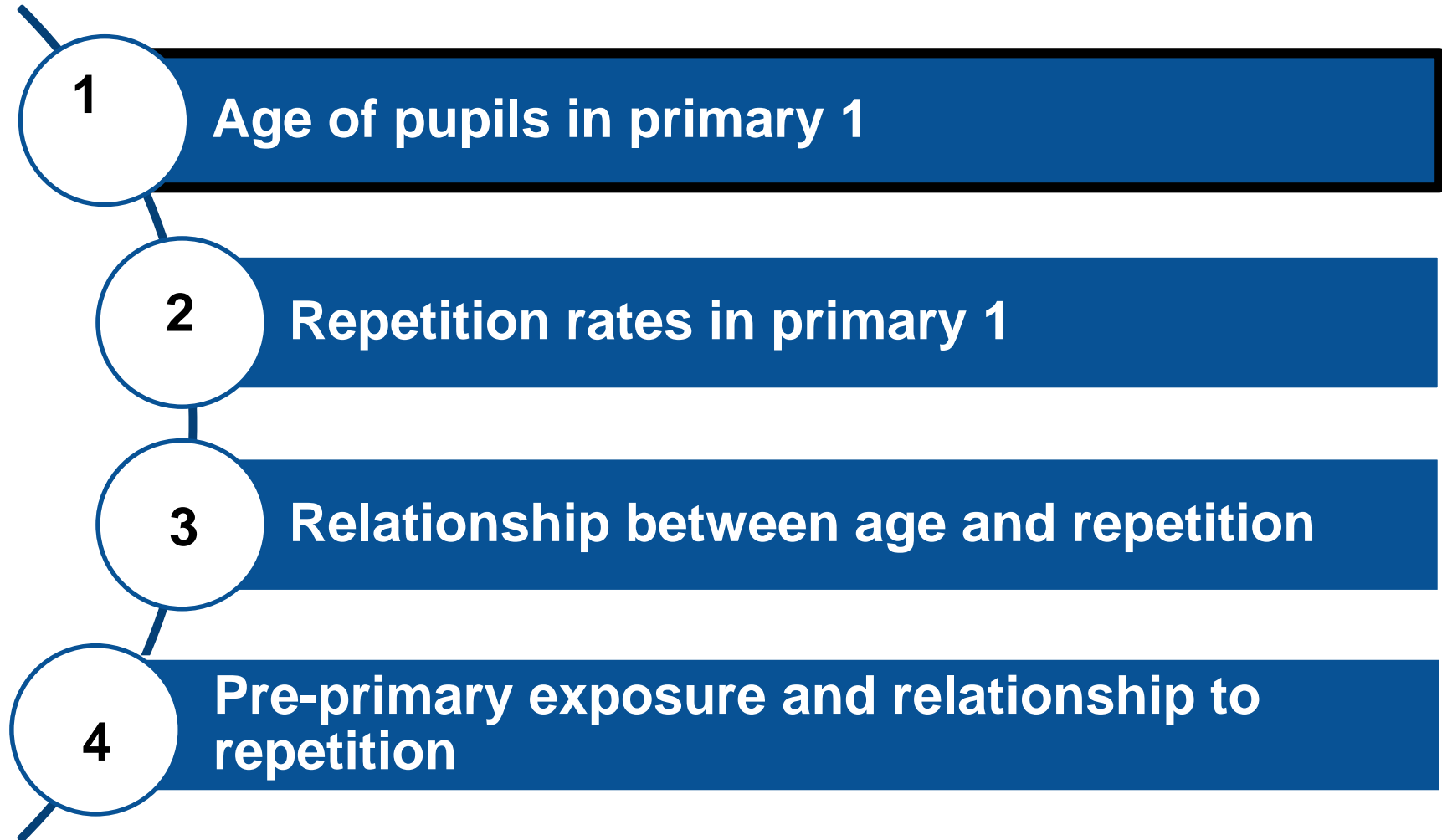
Pupil-level Data

- Parent/guardian interviews
- Teacher interviews

School/Classroom-level Data

- Classroom registers
- Head teacher registers
- EMIS forms

Research Questions



Findings: Enrolment and Age

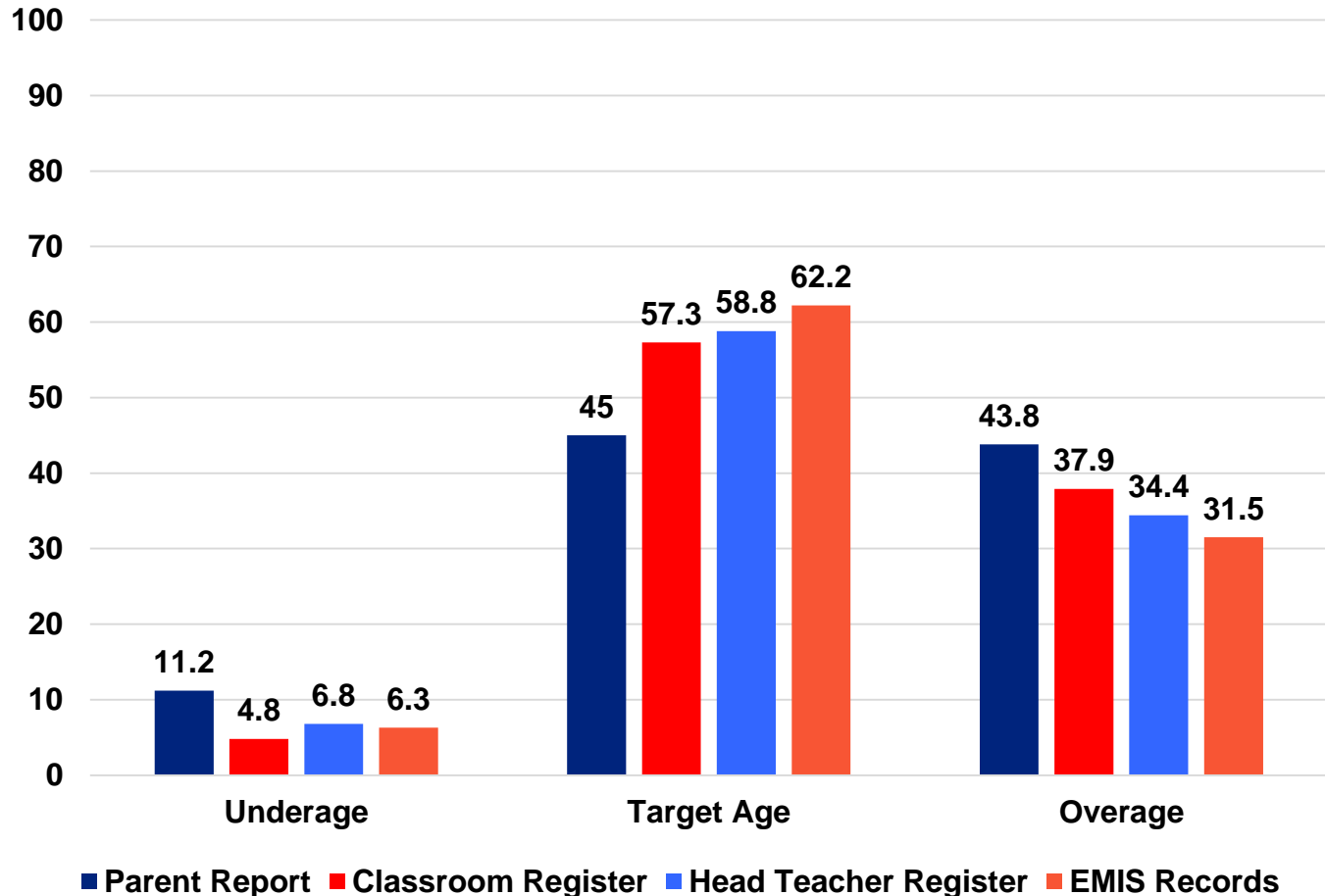
What is the enrolment pattern and age distribution of pupils enrolled in primary 1, according to school records, teachers, and parents/guardians?

Underage
= Under 6 years

Target age
= 6-7 years

Overage
= 8 years and up

(Education Act of 2008)



Findings: Enrolment and Age

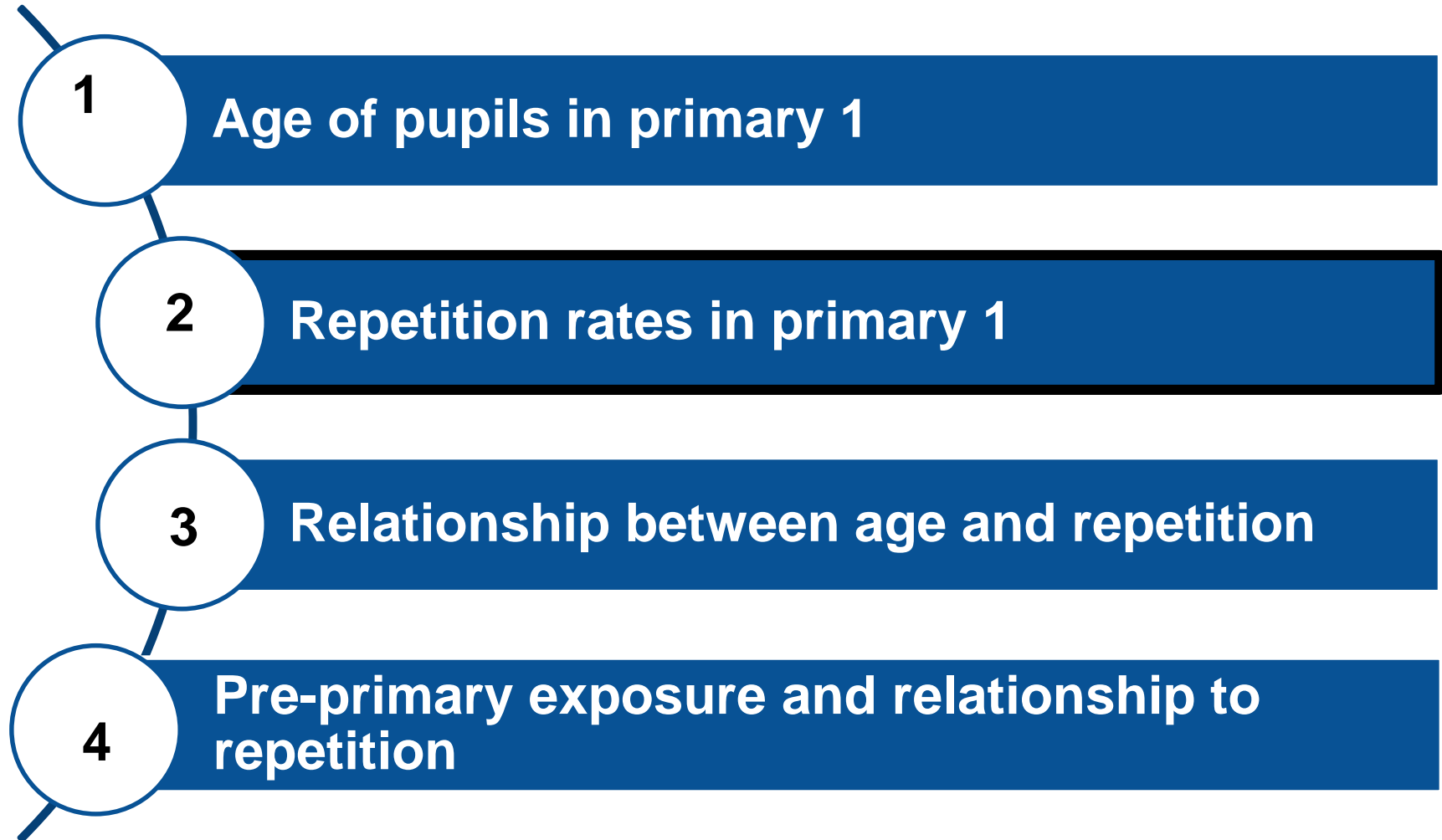
Discrepancy between school records and parent/guardian report

School records show that most pupils are at the appropriate age for primary 1

Parent report shows almost equal percentages of pupils who are at target age and overage.

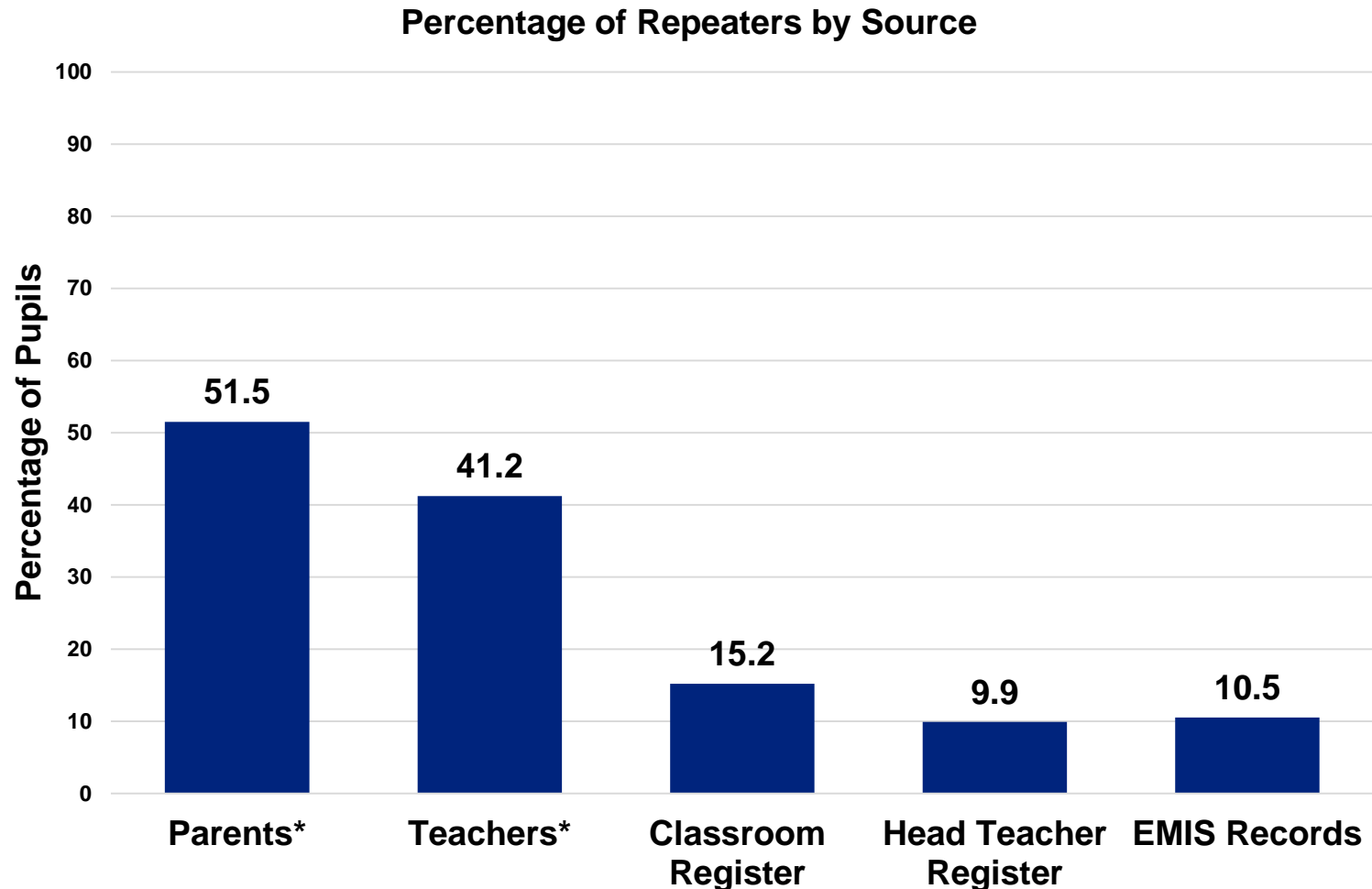
Low levels of children who are underage for grade.

Research Questions



Findings: Repetition Rate

What is the repetition rate in primary 1, according to school records, teachers, and parents/caregivers?



* Responses regarding randomly selected pupils, not the whole class population

Findings: Reasons for Repetition

Parent/guardian- and teacher-report of reasons for child repeating		
Parent/guardian report	Percentage^a	<i>n</i>
Child did not learn enough	18.8%	218
Child failed class	11.1%	133
Child is too young	4.4%	57
Child missed exams due to illness	3.0%	36
Child missed too much school	2.5%	32
Teacher report	Percentage^a	<i>n</i>
Teacher or school didn't think child learned enough	22.8%	284
Child was sick or absent too often	6.9%	118
Child started too young	6.2%	92
Parent/guardian did not think child learned enough	4.4%	61

*Does not include pupils in hidden pre-primary.

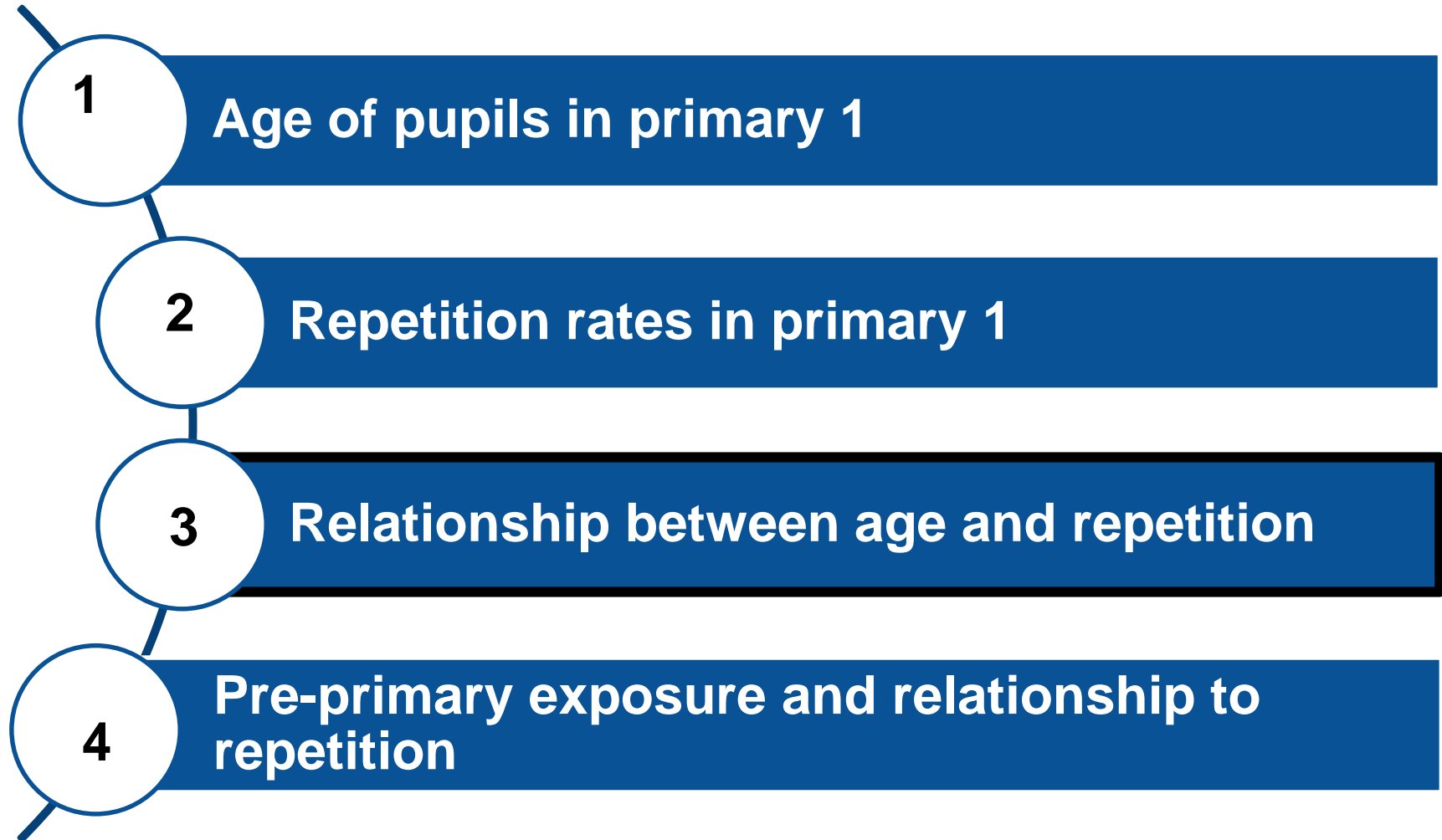
^aThe reasons listed do not constitute all reasons given by parents/guardians and teachers; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%.

Findings: Expectations of Progression to Primary 2

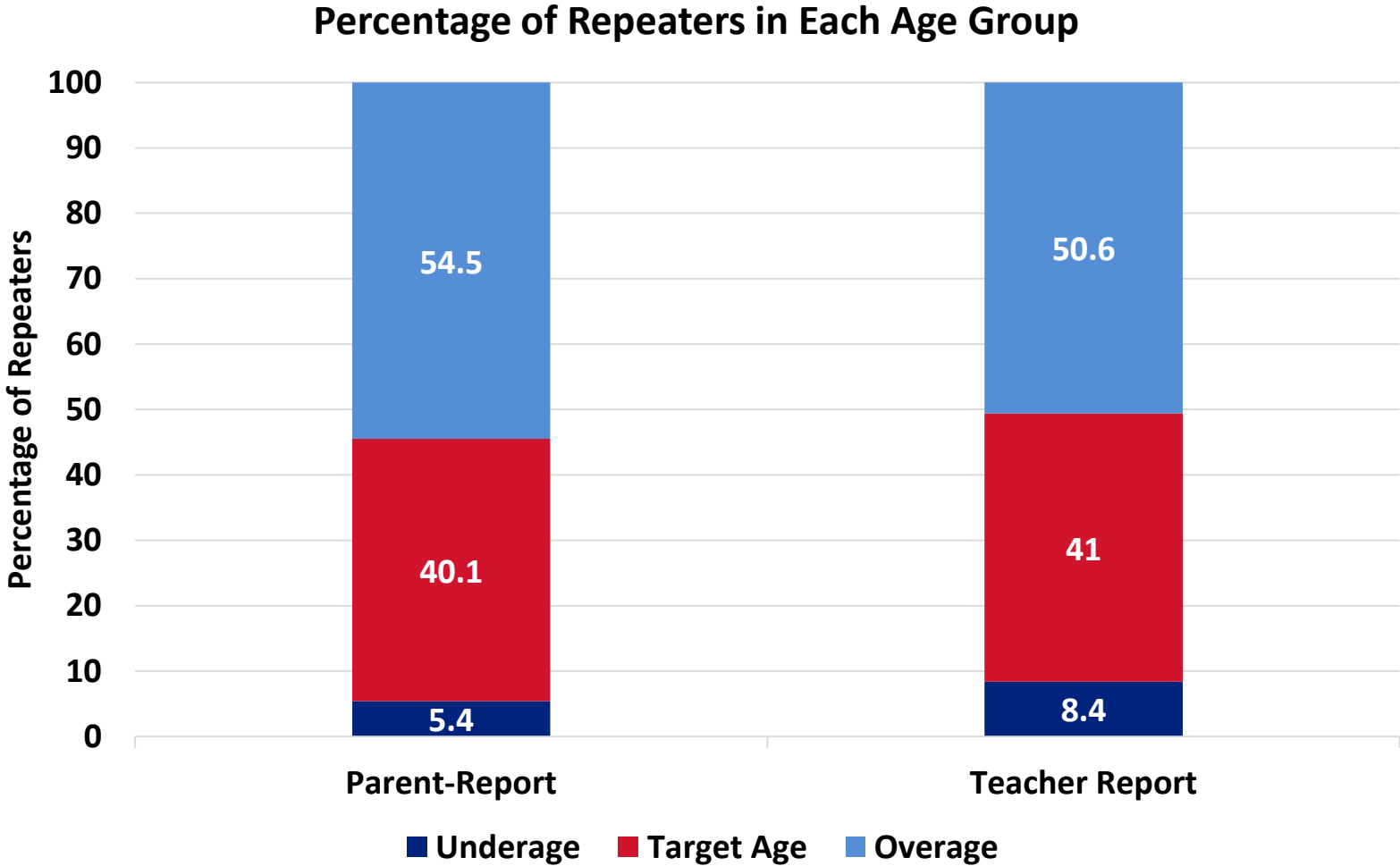
Table 6. Parent/guardian-report of expectation of next year		
Reason	Percentage	N
Primary 1 (child is expected to repeat primary 1)	19.4%	216
Primary 2 (child will progress to next grade)	77.1%	1059

Table 7. Teacher-report of expectation of next year		
Reason	Percentage	N
Primary 1 (pupil is expected to repeat primary 1)	40.9%	568
Another primary 1 stream/classroom	14.7%	181
Same primary 1 stream/classroom	26.2%	387
Primary 2 (pupil will progress to primary 2)	57.1%	844

Research Questions



Findings: Age Group and Repetition

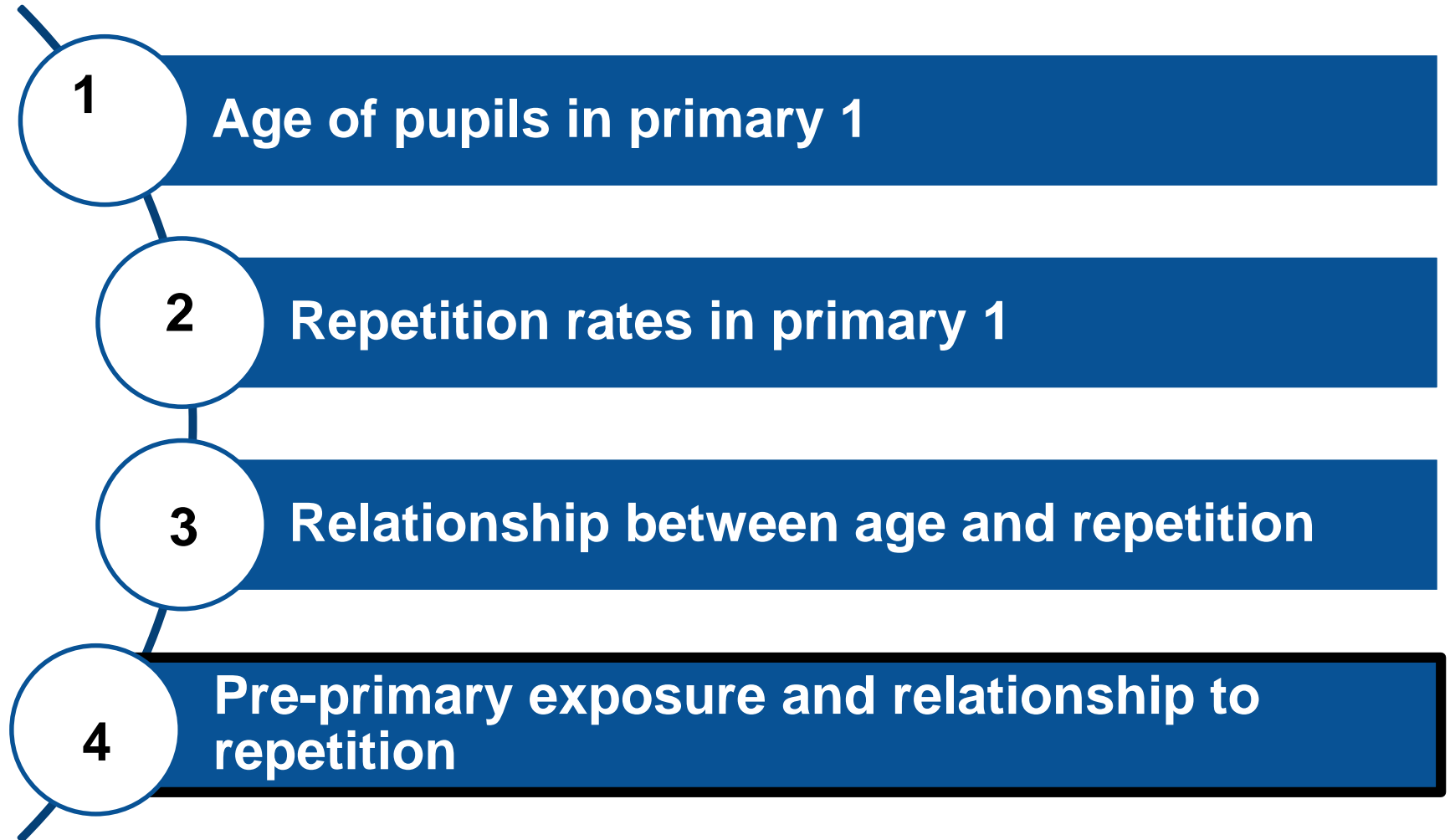


Findings: Underage at Time of Enrolment

26% of parents/guardians enrolled their child in primary 1 before the age of 6 years.

56% of those parents/guardians reported that they knew the child would repeat primary 1.

Research Questions



Pre-primary participation rates

Pre-primary participation		
Attendance status	Percentage	n
Attended pre-primary	33.9%	464
Registered	38.6%	168
Unregistered	33.2%	157
Don't know	27.4%	136
Did not attend pre-primary	59.4%	781
Attended hidden pre-primary	6.4%	70
Don't know	0.2%	3

Determinants of repetition

Odds ratio for factors of repetition and pre-primary attendance

Determining factor	Odds ratio for repetition
No exposure to pre-primary	3.8***
Being a girl	0.74
Under-age at enrolment compared to target age	1.65**
Over-age at enrolment compared to target age	0.79
Lowest quartile SES compared to highest quartile SES	1.2
Mid-Low SES	1.01
Mid-High SES	0.75
Disability (parent/guardian reported)	2.11**

Determinants of repetition

Odds ratio for factors of repetition and pre-primary attendance

Determining factor	Odds ratio for repetition
No exposure to pre-primary	3.8***
Being a girl	0.74

Pupils who did not go to pre-primary school were 3.8 times more likely to repeat than those who did.

quartile SES	
Mid-Low SES	1.01
Mid-High SES	0.75
Disability (parent/guardian reported)	2.11**

Determinants of repetition

Odds ratio for factors of repetition and pre-primary attendance

Determining factor	Odds ratio for repetition
No exposure to pre-primary	3.8***
Being a girl	0.74
Under-age at enrolment compared to target age	1.65**
Over-age at enrolment compared to target	0.79

Pupils who were underage at time of enrolment were 1.65 times more likely to repeat than pupils who were at target age.

Disability (parent/guardian reported)	2.11**
---------------------------------------	--------

Determinants of repetition

Odds ratio for factors of repetition and pre-primary attendance

Determining factor	Odds ratio for repetition
No exposure to pre-primary	3.8***
Being a girl	0.74
Under-age at enrolment compared to target age	1.65**

Pupils reported having a disability were 2.11 times more likely to repeat than pupils who were not reported as having a disability.

Mid-High SES	0.75
Disability (parent/guardian reported)	2.11**



Policy Recommendations

Recommendations

Prioritize support for vulnerable children.

Revisit current policy around automatic promotion.

Invest to expand high-quality pre-primary as well as to improve the quality of primary education.

Improve school management and leadership of the early grades.

Special Thanks

- GOU
- Participating schools
- DRASPAC
- DFID

This presentation references the following report & peer-reviewed article:

Weatherholt, T., Crouch, L., Pressley, J., Jordan, R., Healey, H., Merseeth, K., & Dombrowski, E. (2018). Uganda Early Years Enrolment and Repetition. Report prepared for UK Aid East Africa Research Hub.

Weatherholt, T., Jordan, R., Crouch, L., & Barnett, E. (2019). Drivers and challenges of over-enrollment in early primary school in Uganda. *International Journal of Early Childhood*.



References

- Amadio, M. (1996). *Primary school repetition: a global perspective*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001493/149393eo.pdf>
- Behrman, J. R., & van Ravens, J. (2013). Ex-ante benefit-cost analysis of individual, economic and social returns from proposed investment scenarios for pre-primary schooling in Uganda. Retrieved from <http://fenu.or.ug/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Ex-Ante-Benefit-Cost-Analysis-for-ECD-in-Uganda-May-2013.pdf>
- Brunette, T., Crouch, L., Cummiskey, C., Dick, A., Henny, C., Jordan, R., ... Weatherholt, T. (2017). *Repetition of primary 1 and pre-primary education in Uganda*. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI Press.
- Cambridge Education. (2017). *Review of the 2007 education sector early childhood development policy and operational standards*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Education.
- Crouch, L., & Merseeth, K. A. (2017). Stumbling at the first step: efficiency implications of poor performance in the foundational first five years. *Prospects*, 1–22.
- Cuadra, E., & Ewert, G. (1987). *Comparison of school records with parent's information of enrollment, repetition, and dropout: a field study in Honduras*. Project Bridges: Harvard University.
- Gibbs, B. G., & Heaton, T. B. (2014). Drop out from primary to secondary school in Mexico: A life course perspective. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 36, 63–71.
- Glick, P., & Sahn, D. E. (2010). Early academic performance, grade repetition, and school attainment in Senegal: a panel data analysis. *The World Bank Economic Review*, lhp023.
- Heckman, J. J. (2008). Schools, skills, and synapses. *Economic Inquiry*, 46(3), 289–324.

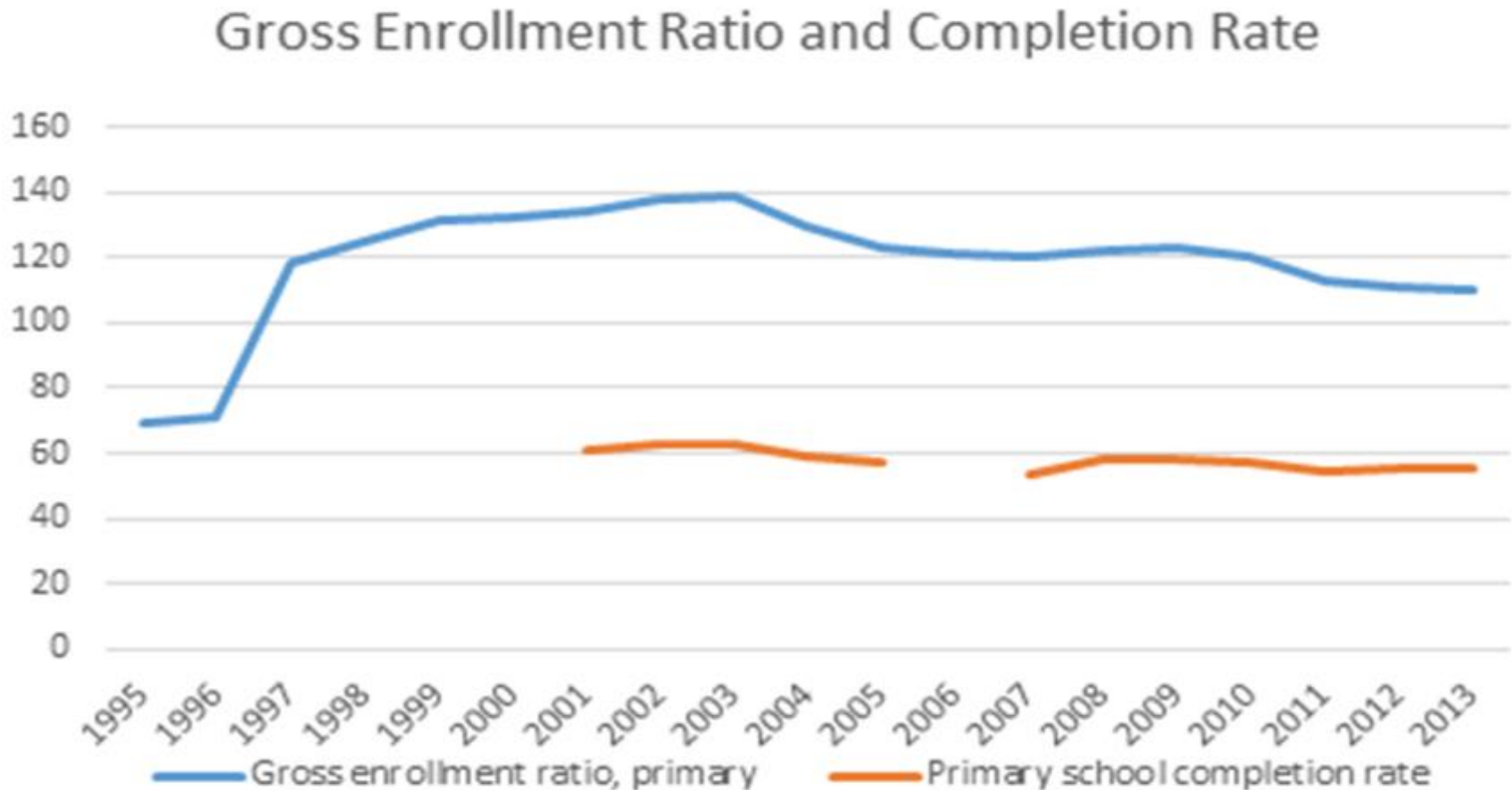
References

- Human Rights Watch (2015). *Complicit in exclusion: South Africa's failure to guarantee an inclusive education for children with disabilities*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch
- Hungi, N. (2010). What are the levels and trends in grade repetition. *SACMEQ III Policy Issues Series*, 5.
- Kirp, D. L. (2007). *The sandbox investment: The preschool movement and kids-first movement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Klein, R., & Ribeiro, S. C. (1991). O censo educacional e o modelo de fluxo: o problema da repetência. *Revista Brasileira de Estatística*, 52(197/198), 5–45.
- Ministry of Education & Sports. (2014). *The Education and Sports Sector Annual Performance Report (FY2013/14)*. Retrieved from http://www.education.go.ug/files/downloads/ESSAPR%202013_14%20%281%29.pdf
- Nores, M., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Benefits of early childhood interventions across the world: (under) investing in the very young. *Economics of Education Review*, 29(2), 271–282.
- Sabates, R., Hossain, A., & Lewin, K. M. (2013). School drop out in Bangladesh: insights using panel data. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33(3), 225–232.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015). Primary Completion Rate. The World Bank Group. Retrieved from <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/country/uganda>
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015). Pre-primary Gross Enrolment. The World Bank Group. Retrieved from <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/country/uganda>

Low Primary School Completion Rates in Uganda

UPE was adopted by the Government of Uganda in 1997

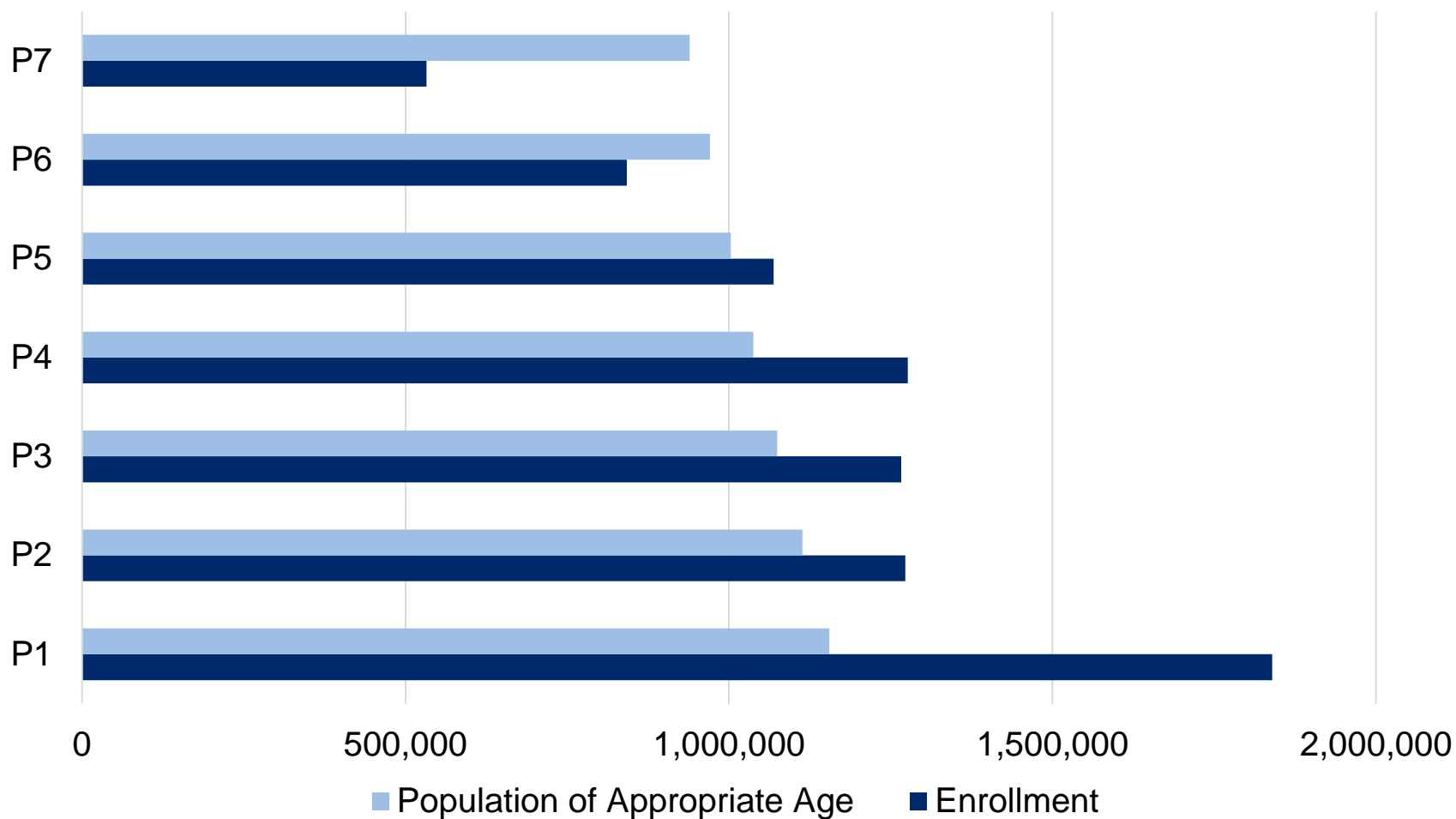
- Enrolment = 2.5 million (1996)
- Enrolment = 8.2 million (2015)



(UNESCO, 2015)

Grade-Specific Enrolment Rates Higher than 100%

Enrolment with Population Overlay



Source: Graphed by RTI from enrollment data sourced from the EMIS 2013 (Ministry of Education 2014) and, for population, World Bank's EdStats system data (<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/wDataQuery/QFull.aspx>.)

High Repetition Rates



- In Uganda, 2016 pilot study found repetition rates 30% to 40% higher than officially reported in Mbale and Kumi. (Brunette et al., 2016)
- Under-reported repetition is not new. (Amadio, 1996, Cuadra & Ewer, 1987; Gargiulo & Crouch, 1994; Gimeno, 1984; Klein & Roberio, 1991; Schiefelbein & Wolff, 1993)
- A policy of automatic promotion does not address poor learning outcomes. (Glick & Sahn, 2010)

Findings: Parents' Perceptions of Education

What are parents/guardians' attitudes and expectations about pre-primary education and repetition in primary 1?

- Parents/guardians' expectations of learning in pre-primary school are primarily academic in nature although other types of learning are also expected.
- 75% of parents/guardians reported that the reason for sending their child to pre-primary school is to learn, followed by the child is ready and the child was the right age.
- 60% of parents/guardians did not send their child to pre-primary school due to financial reasons.
- Most parents/guardians reported that a child should start pre-primary school at 3 or 4 years of age.
- 38% of parents/guardians reported that a child should start primary 1 at 6 years of age, and 23% reported at 7 years.

Mean Repetition Rate by District

